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ABSTRACT

The Exemplary Schools Project was a national cooperative project that identified successful Canadian secondary schools and analyzed their practices to suggest policy implications. Five issues were examined: the meaning and recognition of success; interactions between the school and its context; the influence of school structures, processes, and culture in fostering success; characteristics of student life in school; and services provided to at-risk students. From over 260 nominations, 21 diverse secondary schools were selected, including large urban schools, small rural schools, minority-language schools, and Aboriginal schools. A research team spent 20 days at each school gathering information, from which case studies, a national report, a video, and a resource archive were developed. Chapter 1 discusses challenges facing secondary education in Canada in the 1990s. Chapter 2 describes the origins of the project, research design, school selection process, data collected, and framework for analyses. Chapter 3 describes the 21 schools studied. Chapter 4 deals with the meaning of school in terms of attendance, discipline, grades, and the relationship between social and academic learning. Chapter 5 discusses issues related to the formal curriculum, especially what constitutes the core. Chapter 6 examines the school environment and how schools respond to diversity, gender issues, student power, and at-risk students. Chapter 7 explores teacher issues such as collegiality, professional development, teaching methods, and the influence of technology. Chapter 8 discusses parent involvement, partnerships with business and community, centralization, and school choice. Chapter 9 addresses the sharing of information, school accountability, and the relevance of research. Chapter 10 includes conclusions and implications for policy and practice. Two appendices list advisory committee members and the case study schools and their reports. Contains 58 references. (TD)

Canadian Education Association

Secondary Schools in Canada

The National Report of the Exemplary Schools Project

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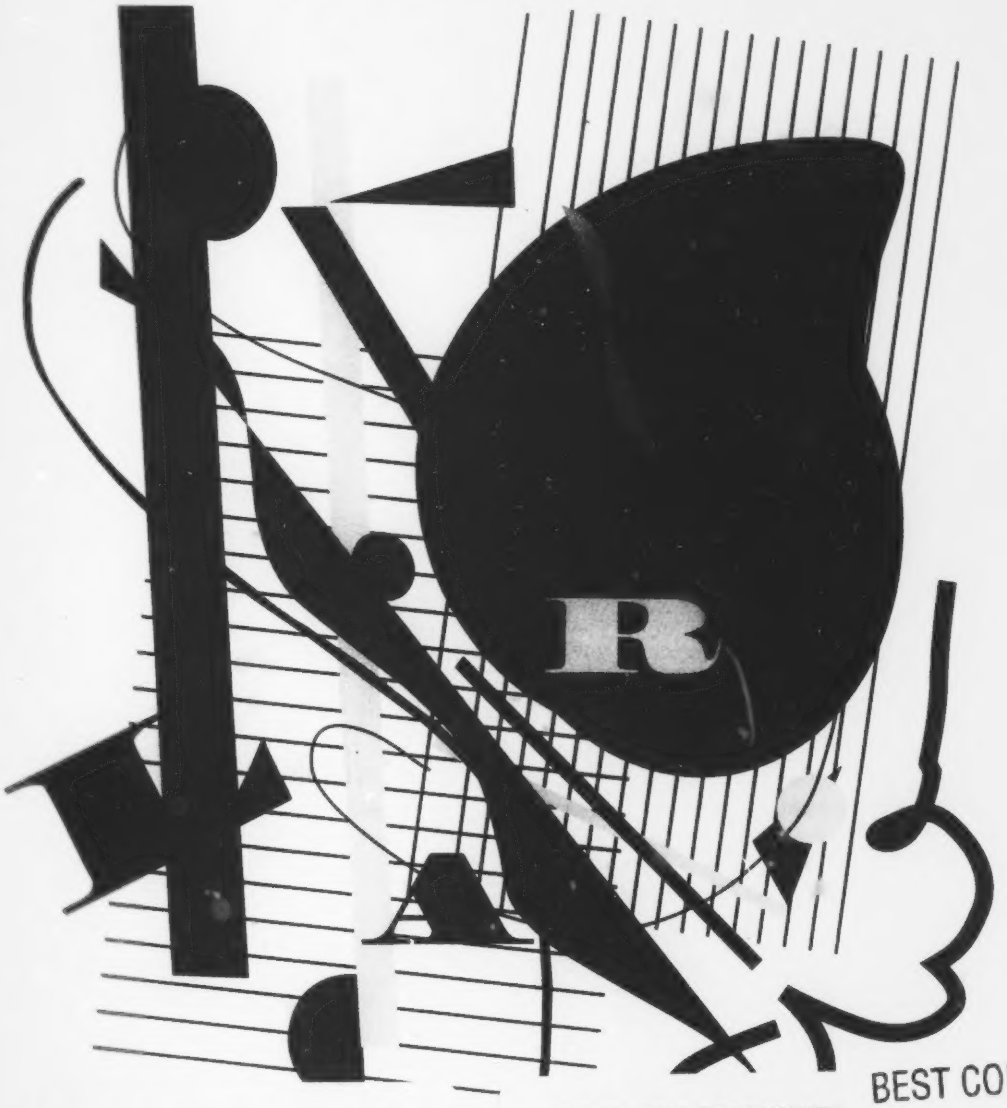

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SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN CANADA

The National Report of the Exemplary Schools Project

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1995

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Preface

THE EXEMPLARY SCHOOLS PROJECT was a major research study of a highly diverse, selected group of secondary schools across Canada. The project was funded by the Innovations Program of Human Resources Development Canada and administered by the Canadian Education Association.

This national study was the largest of its kind ever undertaken in Canada. As a collaborative exercise in education research, it broke new ground and was supported by a more broadly based group of constituencies than any previous study of this type.

Work on the project was assisted by an Advisory Committee of representatives from the 12 provincial and territorial government ministries responsible for elementary and secondary education, and from national organizations of parents, trustees, teachers and education administrators. (See Appendix A.)

The research design was developed by a Co-ordinating Committee that also supervised and co-ordinated all aspects of the research. Members of this committee were as follows: Dr. Jane Gaskell — Chair (University of British Columbia), Dr. Jo-ann Archibald (University of British Columbia), Dr. Margaret Haughey (University of Alberta), Dr. Patrick Renihan (University of Saskatchewan), Dr. Dennis Thiessen (University of Toronto), Dr. Mary Maguire (McGill University), Dr. Claude Deblois (Université Laval), and Dr. David MacKinnon (Acadia University). Dr. Norman Henchey (Professor Emeritus, McGill University) provided liaison with Human Resources Development Canada. Mr. Patrick Fleck was the Director of the Project for the Canadian Education Association.

Following selection of the schools, research teams were deployed, through contractual arrangements with ten universities from coast to coast, to gather data in the schools and their respective communities. In all, more than 60 researchers collected data during the 1993-1994 school year. Principal researchers for each school site wrote extensive case studies, which, in turn, became the primary resource material for the national report.

This report is the culmination of two and one-half years of intensive planning and research by the Canadian Education Association, research teams, participating schools, and school districts. The principal author was Dr. Jane Gaskell, Associate Dean, Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia. Hers was the challenging task of studying the 21 case studies submitted by the research teams and creating a framework for analysis and the discussion of the findings.

The Co-ordinating Committee, and principal authors of the case studies, assisted the writing process by suggesting examples to illustrate themes for discussion, and by offering suggestions for improvement of the various drafts of the report.

Executive Summary

CANADIAN EDUCATION in the1990s is facing a series of challenges, including a questioning of the structure of public education, concern about the quality of schools, increased diversity of needs and expectations, and a changing relationship between schooling and the world of work. These challenges have particular significance for secondary education.

The Study

The Exemplary Schools Project was a co-operative venture of the Canadian Education Association, the Department of Human Resources Development Canada, and several universities. Its aims were to identify and analyze successful practice in schools in different regions and to suggest policy implications. The project identified secondary schools across Canada that had a reputation for success and examined five issues: 1) the meaning and recognition of success, 2) interaction between the school and its context, 3) influence of structures, processes and culture of the school in fostering success, 4) the characteristics of student life in the school, and 5) services provided to students at risk of dropping out of school.

Twenty-one schools were selected from over 260 nominations. No claim was made that these schools were exemplary in the sense that they deserved uncritical imitation: they were intended to illustrate the diversity of Canadian secondary schools, the challenges they face, the tensions they must try to resolve, and the creative responses that many schools are making to these challenges and tensions. A research team was assigned to each school; spent a minimum of 20 days in the school collecting documents, observing the school, and interviewing key people in the school and the community; and prepared a case study. In addition, a national report was developed, a video produced, and a set of archives of resources established.

The Schools

The schools were chosen from nine provinces and one territory. They included ten large urban schools with a diverse clientele, seven small schools serving a primarily rural population, and four alternative schools. The set included both academic and comprehensive schools, minority-language schools, schools for Aboriginal students, large schools with over 1,500 students, and small schools with under 300 students.

The Analysis

The case studies and national report analyzed a wide variety of issues: the view of school success, links between knowledge and power, debates over issues of curriculum, social goals of schools, ways of responding to diverse needs and expectations, qualities of student life, strategies for engaging students at risk of dropping out, the role and work of teachers, patterns of teaching, links with the community, community influence and choice, and the problem of information feedback and school accountability.

Outline of Chapters

The first three chapters introduce the project. Chapter 1 discusses secondary education in Canada in the 1990s, in particular, the challenges facing schools, the current preoccupation with restructuring, and issues of quality, diversity, and the transition from school to work. Chapter 2 describes the origins of the project, development of the research design, the process for selecting the schools, the types of data to be collected, and the framework for analysis. The 21 schools selected for study are described in Chapter 3 in sufficient detail to give the reader a sense of their diversity and to provide an orientation for the findings presented.

Chapters 4 and 5 explore issues in the public debate about the learning that occurs in schools; for example, concerns that students be well educated and able to contribute to their personal improvement and national prosperity, the implications of dropping out of school, curriculum, and the meaning of achievement. Specifically, Chapter 4 deals with issues related to the "currency of schooling": the meaning of school in terms of attendance, discipline, grades, and marks, and the relationship between social and academic learning, Chapter 5 with issues related to the formal curriculum, especially what constitutes the core.

The next two chapters consider the school as a social institution. Schools are human communities, not just places where learning is efficiently transmitted. Secondary schools are places where young people learn to be adults, where they practice citizenship and live with others for some of their most important years. Chapter 6 focuses on the importance of developing a caring environment for students. It examines how schools respond to difference, gender issues and student power, and the opportunities they provide for student leadership. The chapter concludes with descriptions of a wide variety of programs developed for students at risk. Chapter 7 looks at schools as communities of educators, exploring the degree of collegiality and shared norms (hiring, shared purpose, professional development, teachers' organizations), teaching methods and the influence of technology, and the idea of the school as an organic community.

The complex relationship between schools and the larger world is the subject of Chapters 8 and 9. As key social institutions, schools are embedded in a series of contexts, in different levels of environment, with different reference groups and constituencies. In Chapter 8, issues are raised about parent involvement, partnerships with business and community, centralization, and school choice. The sharing of information, the school's accountability to a larger public, and the relevance of research are the main themes of Chapter 9.

In the concluding chapter, outcomes of the analysis of data from the perspective of the five central questions in the research design are discussed, and implications are raised for the development of policy and change in practice in Canadian secondary schools.

The Conclusions

Major Tensions. All schools experience three major tensions, although they vary in how they articulate these tensions and the degree of attention they pay to them: 1) between social and academic goals and functions, 2) between responding to individual and group differences and providing a sense of community and equality of opportunity for all; 3) between professional autonomy and social accountability.

Meaning and Dynamics of Success. School success is a complex, elusive, and constantly evolving concept. Although successful schools are consciously trying to improve, most of them have little systematic knowledge of the nature and extent of their success and few indicators of institutional performance.

Academic and Social Goals. All schools view success in both academic and social terms but the mix varies. Academic success is determined largely by post-secondary entrance requirements and is defined in terms of the right courses and good grades; social success is driven by a concern for order and control and is defined in terms of conformity to disciplinary rules and appropriate behaviour, such as respect for others and a sense of responsibility. All schools are preoccupied with developing and guarding a good reputation in the community.

Influence of Context. Most schools function in multiple contexts — geographic, cultural, economic, administrative. Diversity is less across population groups and provincial/territorial boundaries than across different types of schools; the immediate community has little influence on the academic core of schools, more on peripheral subjects, shared values, and social goals.

Structures. No single structure was identified with successful schools. In practice, schools are a mix of bureaucratic and organic (or collegial) forms of organization; there is no indication that school size in itself promotes or inhibits success; leadership is often rooted in the principal but is also often shared by many in the institution; everyone recognizes that *the* essential element in a successful school is the teachers; the case studies uncovered little debate about curriculum, program structure, and teaching methods; in most schools, communications technology is peripheral to school structures and operations.

Student Life. All schools emphasize the importance of a warm and accepting student life, instilling a sense of belonging to a community, and use a variety of rituals, a sense of tradition, and shared experiences to promote this attitude. Only in a few schools do students have substantial responsibilities related to school policy or student government.

Students at Risk. All schools provide formal or informal programs and services for students at risk of dropping out; there is often debate about the relative value of separating such students for special service and including them in the regular program; the seriousness with which schools strive to help these students is a test of their resolve to allocate resources and demonstrate their "value added" function for those most in need of their services.

The Policy Implications

The issues and tensions in secondary education in Canada identified in the study deserve careful and widespread debate, a debate encouraged by policy makers and informed and enlightened by educational researchers. The most salient issues are listed below.

- School personnel and policy makers need a keener awareness and more systematic knowledge of the environment in which they work, and a wider range of indicators of their performance, if this debate is to be adequately informed.
- Efforts should continue to link research with both policy development and the practice of teaching and to build a research component into the culture of schools.
- Networks should be established to link schools across Canada, encouraging schools of similar types to exchange information and ideas and work on joint projects.
- School leadership should not rely too much on one person but rather on different elements in the school community; collaborative modes seem more enduring and successful.
- Successful schools establish appropriate links with the community, but since communities differ, a variety of formal and informal structures of community involvement should be explored.
- Successful schools depend on having the right people, so more careful attention needs to be given to the engagement and assignment of staff, their professional development, their work and working conditions, and the recognition they receive.
- In a rapidly changing social environment and in the variety of contexts within which schools function, there needs to be more

diversity in school policy, structure, and practice, especially in the areas of program, scheduling, use of community resources, access to learning, distance education, and applications of communications technology.

• It is time for a serious re-thinking of secondary school curriculum, especially the prevailing hierarchy of subject disciplines, to incorporate more areas of knowledge, different ways of organizing knowledge, different modes of inquiry (especially critical and creative thinking skills), more interdisciplinary and problem-based approaches, and closer links between the curriculum and the real-life context of secondary school students.

• Since schools need to emphasize the social goals of education (leadership, maturity, social skills), policy makers and researchers should give more attention to the study, cultivation, and assessment of these skills and to their links with success in the academic sphere, careers, and personal life.

• There should be more discussion about the nature and exercise of power in schools, the preoccupation with social control, the empowerment of students to shape their own programs and organize their student life; serious efforts are needed to encourage students to learn how to learn rather than just consume courses and earn credits.

• More attention should be given to issues of values, ethical behaviour, and spirituality. These are sensitive issues but for that reason important to the development of the skills of mature citizenship — both in schools serving diverse communities and in schools in communities with a high degree of shared values.

• Economic, political, and social pressures are moving secondary schools in the direction of a clearer hierarchy of programs, *de facto* streaming of students, sharper competition in programs, resources, and student achievement, and the marginalization of many programs and students as a result. If high schools are to be more than "prep schools" for post-secondary institutions, if they are to avoid reproducing social hierarchies from one generation to another, they must strengthen their commitment to equality of opportunity to all students — and be honoured for their achievements in this social mission.

Chapter 1

Secondary Education in Canada Today

CANADIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS, like those in most other countries, have undergone profound changes. During the 1960s, educational reforms in every province and territory had to deal with the expanding numbers of "baby boomers" going to secondary school; the increasing expectations of the population for more schooling; and the wider range of interests, talents and goals that students brought to secondary school. New waves of change swept through secondary education during the 1980s and 1990s. These changes were generally impelled by declining enrolments as the big generation moved on to post-secondary institutions, and by an environment of economic turbulence that reduced resources available for secondary education and brought uncertainty to the job prospects of graduates.

One of the most striking features of secondary education in Canada today is the high degree of diversity. Provinces and territories vary in the grade levels they define as secondary education, in the degree to which they have centralized structures, in how they provide minority-language and religious schools, and in the amount of school choice they offer parents and students. Schools also differ in size, organizational structure, programs and services, and community context.

Yet across the country similarities exist as well. There are common assumptions about the nature of secondary education and about goals, expectations and standards. Schools are preoccupied not only with academic success, but also with the behaviour, development, and quality of life of the students in their care. Young people share common experiences regardless of the high school they attend or the region in which they live, experiences arising from the nature of schooling but even more from the learning they are acquiring from the informal curricula of the family, television, shopping mall, and peer culture.

Challenges Facing Secondary Schools

In the 1990s, all educational institutions have been functioning in a climate of intense scrutiny, often accompanied by skepticism, concern, criticism, or outright condemnation. This is not unlike the situation with many other public institutions - the political system, the legal system, and the health system. The critical agenda of education varies from place to place and from critic to critic. The critics include anxious parents, energetic journalists, activist special interest groups, and pressured politicians. And sometimes frustrated students.

This body of criticism shows a number of characteristics. First, most of the debate is taking place within provinces rather than at a national or regional level. Second, much of the "national" literature emanates from Ontario and focuses primarily on the educational situation in that province. Third, there seems little interaction between the educational discourse within Quebec and that in other parts of Canada.

Governments and government agencies have not been indifferent to the problems of education. In recent years every provincial and territorial government has been engaged in some form of educational evaluation and policy development, and extensive reviews have taken place in some provinces and territories. The Federal Government has been more active in the discussion of public education than at any time in its history, through the work of Statistics Canada, Human Resources Development Canada, and other departments and agencies. Public bodies such as the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation in Quebec and the now-defunct Economic Council of Canada have weighed in with a variety of reports, and private groups such as the Conference Board of Canada and the Corporate-Higher Education Forum are having their say about elementary and secondary education.

The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) raised the national profile of the education discussion through its Victoria Declaration in 1993 for a national agenda on education and through the four-day National Consultation on Education held in Montreal in May 1994, to which over 500 persons were invited. The theme of the conference was the quality of education.

Four major areas of concern run through these varied contributions to the education debate: the structure of public education, the quality of schools, the challenges of meeting the educational needs of a pluralistic society, and the economic relevance of schooling. All have particular significance for secondary education.

Structure of Public Education

Some argue that public education systems are too bureaucratic, too centralized, and unresponsive to the expectations of parents, that they form a monopoly, and that they are too rigid, unable and unwilling to change, and not held sufficiently accountable for their performance and results.

This criticism of educational structures has a number of roots: high expectations for the benefits of education,the frustratuion of many parents and teachers based on personal experience, a general climate of suspicion about public service bureaucracy, the search for measures to cut public spending, activities of interest groups to influence the operation and content of education, and trends in the private sector to compete, "downsize," decentralize, and "get close to the consumer."

Yet educational bureaucracies, like other bureaucracies, have evolved for a reason. When they function as they should, they provide a structure for the management of complexity, they replace patronage and impulse with a form of rational decision making, they ensure continuity and institutional memory across political terms of office, they provide expertise and services to institutions and individuals, and they counterbalance narrow, special and local interests with a broader vision and a more universal ethic. On the other hand, bureaucratic structures are better at maintaining the status quo than instituting innovation in response to change.

Major proposals for restructuring public education tend to favour shifting power in two directions: downward to the level of the individual school, where the clients are served, and upward to the provincial or national level where overall goals, standards, and comparisons can be developed. At the community level such a restructuring involves many features: more decision-making power for the individual school (site-based management), more accountability for individual school results, extension of parent choice among schools, and "free market" competition among schools for students and resources, clearer definition of goals and outcomes, more careful assessment of student results and of school effectiveness, and clearer reporting of student progress to parents. At the national level, it involves setting national goals and standards, developing educational indicators of performance, national testing in key areas such as literacy and numeracy, and more collaboration among various regions, jurisdictions and interested groups.

Quality of Schools

Concerns about educational structures arise because of deeper concerns about the quality of schools. Are their goals or intended outcomes clear and worthwhile? Is the curriculum content relevant and challenging? Are expectations and standards demanding? Is teaching effective? Are students getting a good learning experience? How can we find out the answers to these questions?

Some critics rely on personal experiences with schools, some turn to the results of international and interprovincial comparisons of literacy, science, and mathematics. Others use different perspectives: socialization of the young by the "hidden curriculum", the decline of liberal education, or the pressure on schools from political and economic forces.

Beyond the diversity of critiques and perspectives on educational quality, two questions emerge: What educational goals do we wish to pursue? How can we develop comprehensive indicators of educational quality that measure our attainment of these goals, not only while young people are in school but also after they leave?

Diversity

Schools also face serious challenges arising from the increasing diversity of their student body. Diversity enriches the life of schools but it also tests the imagination and will of education systems to respond to the expressed needs of different language, ethnic and religious groups, men and women, affluent and poor, urban and rural communities, and the special situation of Aboriginal communities. Are schools assuring equity for all students? Are they demonstrating how differences can enrich the life of all and should be welcomed? Are schools balancing the needs of adaptation to special groups with the need of presenting a vision of a community in which everyone is included and respected?

Education for Work

While the first three areas of concern — structures, quality, and diversity — deal with the strategy and substance of education, the fourth raises questions about the links between school and society, especially the world of work. Schools have many functions — custodial care of the young, selection, socialization, training in basic skills, stimulating thinking and creativity, widening horizons, helping the young develop their sense of worth - but one important function is to prepare the young for employment.

In the past, the training function of schools, especially secondary schools, was quite clear. They provided training in basic skills, a certain amount of academic knowledge, sometimes specific vocational competencies, and especially attitudes and habits of disciplined behaviour, punctuality, willingness to work within established structures, conscientiousness in following orders, and industriousness.

In this way, schools prepared young people for the world of the civil service and large corporations, or for further study leading to professional or semi-professional occupations. For its part, the economy provided a range of employment possibilities from those with little or no skill requirements to advanced professional, academic, and managerial positions. There was a rough match (though not always a good fit) between schooling and working.

By now it has become well-established wisdom that the structure of the Canadian economy is changing rapidly, shaped by globalization of markets, international trade agreements, high technology, and shifting importance of different areas of economic activity. There are changing conceptions of the nature and organization of work, the workplace, job security, the service sector, and the corporation. Over 70 per cent of Canadians are now employed in the service sector. It is estimated that in this decade 45 per cent of new jobs will require 16 years of schooling; 40 per cent of jobs now fall outside the traditional permanent, full-time 40-hour week model; 70 per cent of married couples with children have both partners working outside the home. These developments have serious implications for the employment prospects of young people and for the kind of preparation they need to enter the labour market.

Young people are urged to stay in school longer and acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable them to live and work in this new environment. But what is this knowledge? What are these skills and attitudes? How are they identified, taught, and assessed? Are they specific to the world of work or are they the more fundamental intellectual, communication and social skills that should be part of a general education? Can the problems of unemployment be solved by raising the level of skills in the Canadian education system without increasing the number and transforming the type of jobs available in the Canadian economy?

The Education System Responds

Governments and education systems have been responding to these challenges. Between 1990 and 1994, the federal Stay-in-School Initiative spent almost $300 million on 800 programs across the country designed to encourage young people to stay in school or return to complete their studies. This program appears to have been successful in increasing school retention, providing students at risk of dropping out with relevant skills and attitudes that encourage them to remain, and stimulating many schools and other agencies to modify their structures and services to help young people who are experiencing difficulties. Many provinces and school boards have also developed similar programs addressed to students at risk.

Structures

A good deal of discussion has taken place in provinces and territories about the restructuring of education. In some jurisdictions this has involved the reduction of the number of school boards or their regrouping into larger units, and new definitions of their powers and responsibilities. A similar movement is taking place in Aboriginal communities, where community organizations are assuming responsibility for federally operated schools.

Several boards have moved towards site-based management and many others are encouraging individual schools to develop mission statements, assume more control over resource allocation and program development, and in some cases "market" themselves in their communities.

Most schools, too, are making serious efforts to establish or strengthen links with their communities, especially with the parents of their students. In some provinces, parent involvement is formalized and institutionalized (for instance, by creating school councils) and in other places, involvement is informal and unstructured.

Quality

Nor are issues of the quality of education being ignored. At the national level, the Council of Ministers of Education (CMEC) has been pursuing ways of improving coordination, communication and information sharing, increasing public awareness of education, and looking for ways to strengthen the links between research and practice. The CMEC has been working with Statistics Canada to develop the Pan-Canadian Education Indicators Program, which will develop procedures for measuring key educational goals, such as achievement, accessibility, student flows through the system, school-work transitions, citizenship, and satisfaction. It also sponsors the School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP) to assess the performance of 13-year-olds and 16-year-olds in key content areas such as mathematics, science, reading and writing.

All provinces and territories have been investigating issues related to the quality of education. Some provinces have launched comprehensive reviews. Although there are important differences among these reports and policy initiatives, certain common themes emerge: the importance of education in preparing youth for a challenging future; the need for a focus on outcomes, goals, priorities, fundamental areas of learning, core curriculum; a desire to improve standards, expectations, programs, and methods of assessing learning while expanding accessibility, especially to those not well served at present; more emphasis on the local school and teachers, and close school-community linkages; preoccupation with the potential of communications technology (computers, CD-ROM, networks such as the Internet and SchoolNet) to enhance access to learning and improve the effectiveness of instruction; simpler, more effective, and less bureaucratic school structures; and the need for more co-operation in an era of diversity and limited resources.

Diversity

Schools and school systems are adapting in many ways to the increasing diversity of student needs. Many urban and suburban systems now have relatively open boundaries, giving parents a choice of schools within the limits of space availability and program offerings. Schools are developing special programs, such as services for students with learning difficulties, the international baccalaureate, advanced placement, First Nations programs, Asian studies, French immersion, and integrated programs especially at the junior high or middle school level. More young women are enrolling in advanced mathematics and science courses. Many schools are making special efforts to ensure that different groups within the student population are recognized and treated with respect.

School and Work

Indications of growing activity on the relation between schooling and the economic environment abound. A variety of business-education relationships have been promoted energetically by organizations such as the Conference Board of Canada and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. Many elementary and secondary schools across Canada have developed valuable and imaginative links with local business and industry, providing resources and expertise to schools and giving students incentives, first-hand knowledge, and often experience in community economic activity.

Work-study and co-operative education programs have expanded, involving students in learning activities both within school and in business. Governments have also been active in strengthening and expanding apprenticeship programs and industry-based training and retraining programs. School-to-work transition has become an important area of research and policy development. Despite these initiatives, however, most schools, communities and enterprises have a long way to go in linking schooling and work effectively.

Clearly, responses are being made to the challenges facing contemporary schooling: structure, quality, diversity and the economy. Yet uncertainty remains the backdrop for all these initiatives.

Questions for Public Education

All of these issues clearly affect the secondary school, some directly, some less directly and more implicitly. Secondary schools are mediating institutions, negotiating the "broad" and medium-term issues of school structures, educational quality, pluralism and job preparation with the "narrow" and immediate realities of communities, parents, school boards and students.

The schools' efforts to cope with increasing demands to be more responsive, adaptive, rigorous, inclusive, and relevant are hampered by the problems of poverty, inequity, family distress, and social discord with which they must deal. Economic pressures are forcing families to relocate in search of work. Youth violence is a serious concern in many communities. "Traditional" families - a married couple with children - now account for fewer than 50 per cent of Canadian families; divorces have increased dramatically, and almost 20 per cent of children under 18 (1.2 million) were living in poverty in 1991.

To make things worse, the resources available to public education are becoming scarcer, often striking at the initiatives most needed to reconcile national challenges with local realities, quality with equality, vision with viability, a society's future with an adolescent's present.

Some policy questions arise:

1. What influence does research have on education policy and practice? What influence should it have?

2. How can we appreciate and respect the complexity of secondary education in Canada and still identify significant patterns among schools and school systems?

3. What are the major dilemmas, tensions and choices facin secondary schools across the country?

4. Are those involved in schools approaching their challenges and practices in a critical and imaginative way?

5. Do schools have sufficient information to serve as a basis for improvement and to provide feedback on how successful they are in meeting their goals?

6. Are schools part of communications networks through which they can share information and profit from what other schools are doing?

7. What styles of leadership are common in schools, how do they promote change, and what are their strengths and weaknesses?

8. What kinds of links have schools developed with their communities and how valuable are these links?

9 What is the importance of having the "right people" as a factor in making a school successful?

10. What are the different ways in which schools approach issues of core programs, curriculum, models of inquiry, scheduling, methods of teaching and learning, and the social objectives of the school, such as a sense of community, equity, personal development?

11. How is the power structure of schools organized and what are the implications? How are teachers and students being "empowered?"

12. How do schools deal with sensitive issues of values, religion and spirituality?

13. Is there a hierarchy of status in a school in terms of programs, accessibility, and groups of students?

14. How are schools handling issues of sexism and racism in curriculum, school organization, expectations, and social relationships?

The need to find some concrete and practical answers to these questions led, in part, to the launching of the national Exemplary Schools Project, the report of which is contained in these pages. The following chapter describes the origin, purposes, nature, and methods of this study.

Chapter 2

The Search for Exemplary Secondary Schools

THE EXEMPLARY SCHOOLS PROJECT has its origins in the Stay-in-School initiative of the Federal Government and increasing criticism of the quality of public education in Canada.

In 1989 the Youth Affairs Branch of the then Department of Employment and Immigration Canada (EIC) launched a four-year program to encourage young people to stay in school at least until they had completed their secondary education. As time went on, the sphere of attention expanded from dropping out to larger issues, such as the quality of schooling, mastery of literacy and other basic skills, the changing labour market, and the problem of transition from school to work.

The Innovations Program of EIC had responsibility for applied social science research related to the development of human resources, and this included at least certain aspects of education. In late 1991 an Innovations advisory committee recommended that the program "undertake research projects on a number of education-related issues," with priority given to "projects which will provide information on which public policy makers can take effective action to implement the findings of the research."

During 1992, the Innovations Program, together with the Youth Affairs Branch, sponsored three exploratory workshops involving policy makers and researchers, the first on restructured and alternative learning environments, the second on the school-to-work transition, and the third called "Exemplary Schools/Alternative Learning Environments."

In particular, this third workshop in September 1992 laid the foundation for the Exemplary Schools Project. Some areas of agreement emerged from the discussions. First, there was need for a research project on exemplary schools and it should be started without delay. Second, for a variety of reasons, a qualitative case-study approach should be used in preference to quantitative surveys or experiments. Third, importance should be accorded to the different contexts in which schools function. Fourth, the purposes should be to improve the quality of education for all young people, not only students at risk, to raise public confidence in education, and to establish a network of researchers, policy makers and practitioners. Fifth, the sample should be between 12 and 18 regular and alternative secondary schools, selected on the basis of some form of expert opinion or screening, and using a variety of criteria. The project would be funded by Employment and Immigration Canada and administered by the Canadian Education Association (CEA).

Planning

Following the 1992 workshop, discussions took place between officials of the Innovations Program and the CEA, and a project director was appointed. A contribution agreement between EIC and the CEA was signed in December 1992, according to which the CEA was responsible for the direction and management of the project.

The project title was Exemplary Secondary Schools in Canada: A Study of Effectiveness. There were two objectives: (1) To conduct research that would identify promising practices in a representative cross-section of Canadian regions and communities and provide information useful to provincial and school board policy makers about secondary schools or programs that offer significant evidence that students typically at risk of dropping out can be kept in school, achieve success and proceed to graduation; (2) To make a positive contribution to the improvement of secondary school student retention and achievement in Canada.

The agreement called for a structure including a project director, a project advisor and EIC liaison person, a design team to prepare the research proposal, a CEA advisory committee, and a co-ordinating committee to oversee the project. The agreement further envisaged a sample of between 18 and 25 schools, the use of a case study approach, and a stress on the importance of the socio-cultural context of schools.

The CEA struck a special advisory committee to be consulted in the design and implementation of the project and to maintain links with various sectors of the educational community. It was composed of representatives of national associations and of provincial and territorial ministries/departments of education. (See Appendix A.)

In March and April 1993 a design team was formed, composed of Jane Gaskell, University of British Columbia (chair), Joann Archibald (First Nations House of Learning, UBC), Margaret Haughey (University of Alberta), Patrick Renihan (University of Saskatchewan), Dennis Thiessen (University of Toronto), Mary Maguire (McGill University), Claude Deblois (Université Laval), David MacKinnon (Acadia University), Patrick Fleck (Project Director) and Norman Henchey (EIC Liaison).

Between April and June 1993 the design team held a number of meetings to develop a research design and select the schools for the study. The team was under some pressure of time because both tasks had to be accomplished by the end of June so that the case studies could take place in the school year 1993-94.

Developing a Research Design

A number of preliminary decisions were made that shaped the research design. The unit of analysis would be a school, not a program, department, class or teacher. Only secondary schools that offered the last grade of secondary education as defined by the province or territory would be studied, in general, schools that included grades 7 to 12. This narrowed the number of issues that would have to be engaged and ensured some consistency among schools.

Some reservations were expressed about the word "exemplary" as meaning excellent, model, ideal, held up for emulation, or illustration. Some schools and researchers were comfortable with the concept, others felt the description would be pretentious, unrealistic, or misleading when applied to a real school situation. Yet the word "exemplary" continued to be used. It was the formal title of the project and the term used when schools agreed to participate. It was not being used to suggest that the schools are perfect, without faults, held up for uncritical admiration and emulation; it was less an attribute or product than a process of dealing with the dilemmas and tensions every school faces. Other possible terms such as "effective," "successful," "good" or "world class" also pose problems of interpretation. In this project the word exemplary is used in the sense of "serving as an illustration," recognizing that schools are human institutions, involving complex relationships in unpredictable (and often uncontrollable) situations. Nonetheless, these schools are known and admired in their communities and have something to say about secondary education in Canada in the 1990s.

The schools would be selected from nominations based on the reputation of the school. Nominations were to be solicited for both public and separate schools (operated by a school board), band schools (First Nations) and private schools (regardless of funding structure).

The emphasis was on what makes the school successful, using a variety of indicators. No systematic evaluations of institutions would be conducted, making judgements about all aspects of a school's structures, resources, procedures and performance, as one would do in an accrediting process. Social science researchers are sometimes accused of concentrating on what is wrong rather than on searching for what is right, describing pathology rather than health. This project is an attempt to look at educational health, what it is seen to be, how it is achieved, and what obstacles interfere with its development.

There was no *a priori* definition of what constituted success: how different groups in the school community defined success would be one of the questions studied. No comprehensive data base or set of data bases existed nationally that would permit a selection of schools on the basis of student achievement or other indicators. In addition, attention would be paid to what furthers success for all students, not just those considered at risk of failure or dropping out of school. While the lack of systematic data on Canadian schools complicated the selection of schools for this study, it emphasized the need for a study of this type.

The method used was qualitative, case-study research based on observations, interviews, and study of documents (Merrian, 1990; Yin, 1984). Schools were not being compared and certainly not being ranked on some scale of "exemplariness," and quantitative data or statistical indicators were to be used only to clarify and make more precise the results of observation and judgement. A case study for each school was to be prepared by a team of researchers; methods included the equivalent of at least 20 days of observation and interviews on site, generally in two sessions, one in November 1993 and a second in February-March 1994.

Efforts would be made through meetings, research protocols, and visits by a team to all schools to maintain some consistency in approach among sites, since this is a national study.

A set of ethical guidelines was established to ensure informed consent by all participants in the study; a school would have the right to use a pseudonym and to have a comment appended to the case study, if it so wished. In addition to the school case studies, there would be a national report summarizing the findings and analyzing patterns across the country.

A design report was prepared for July 1993, including the main research questions, the selection of schools, and the design, methodology, organization, time line and budget of the project.

There were five general research questions:

(1) How do members of the school community describe, recognize and respond to school success?

(2) How does the school interact with its administrative/political and social/economic/cultural context?

(3) How do the organization and the social processes of the school, as well as the beliefs of members of the school community, foster an environment supportive of success?

(4) What characteristics of student life in the school encourage success?

(5) How does the school respond to students perceived to be at risk of dropping out before completing their secondary education?

These questions were intended to touch upon the five main areas to be studied in each school: the meaning of success, the relationship between the school and its environment, the internal organization and culture of the institution, student life, and specific measures to serve students at risk of dropping out. These questions suggested two dimensions: what is happening and what is perceived to be happening, based on interviews, documents, observations and analysis. They assumed a certain distinctiveness in how each school defines and interprets success and how this is shared in the community, as well as some common elements of successful schooling that transcend individual environments and school philosophies.

Following discussion of the design report and budget estimates with officials of EIC in July 1993, additional funding was provided and the time line extended to March 31, 1995. At the same time, in the interest of establishing some national consistency in the research, detailed research protocols were prepared and sent to researchers for their consideration.

Selecting the Schools

The process of selecting the schools for the study involved seven stages: preparation of a nomination form and covering letter, preparation of a list of individuals and groups to whom the nomination material would be sent, analysis of nomination forms returned, initial selection of schools, further inquiries and consultations, final selection of schools, and approval from the school district and school.

A simple two-page nomination form was prepared with the following elements: (a) general information on the school being nominated, (b) reasons why the school is considered "a particularly successful learning environment for students," (c) information about the student population, (d) information about the school's program, (e) information on the person making the nomination and the organization she/he represented.

The covering letter provided information about the purpose of the project and stressed the following points: the purpose is the identification of "especially successful secondary schools" in Canada; the school need not be associated with the jurisdiction or the organization which the nominator represented; schools must, regardless of grade range, offer at least the last grade of secondary education as defined by the province or territory (normally grade 12, grade 11 in Quebec); the entire school must be nominated, not an individual class, program or unit within a school; no set of specific criteria for defining a successful school is provided; the following factors may be considered: good reputation, student accomplishment, low dropout rate, success in meeting challenges, success in responding to a diversity of student needs, success with particular populations such as Aboriginal students; any number of nominations may be made by an individual or organization. Nominations had to be returned by June 11, 1993, three weeks from the time of mailing.

Over 2,000 nomination forms were sent out: 38 per cent went to school board officials, 23 per cent to Aboriginal organizations, 8 per cent to national and provincial education associations (administrators, teachers, trustees, etc.), 8 per cent to individuals and organizations in business and industry, 6 per cent to members of faculties of education, 6 per cent to educational specialists in print and electronic media, 5 per cent to officials in federal and provincial governments, 4 per cent to community organizations, 1 per cent to labour unions and associations, and 1 per cent to parents' organizations.

By the end of June, 291 nominations had been received: 54 per cent from persons in school boards, 10 per cent from individual schools, 10 per cent from government officials, 9 per cent from various associations, and the remaining 17 per cent from universities, business and labour groups, parents, Aboriginal groups and others.

In all, 261 secondary schools were nominated, some by more than one person; these included 85 schools under the jurisdiction of religious or separate school boards and 6 private schools. Geographically, the nominated schools were distributed as follows: 39 from the Atlantic provinces, 48 from Quebec, 88 from Ontario, 50 from the Prairie provinces, 32 from British Columbia, and 4 from the territories.

Not unexpectedly, nominators used a variety of criteria to support their choice. These included special problems the school faced, such as isolation, diversified clientele, students with special needs; quality of staff, especially principal and teachers; culture or environment of the school, sense of security, warmth, community, support; variety of programs and services offered to meet student needs; particular focus or mission of the school; relations with parents, business and the local community; reputation and tradition of the school; results and accomplishments in terms of external examinations, placement of students in post-secondary institutions, success of graduates in finding jobs; specific processess and techniques, such as co-operative education, mentoring, use of computers, work-study programs; processes of change and innovation in the school; success of the school in improving its image, transforming its programs, and changing its mission. Arguments based on school procedures and climate far outnumbered those based on external indicators of achievement.

Members of the design team gave further study to the schools selected and made inquiries from education specialists in the various regions. Finally, a list of 21 schools was established.

The selection criteria were as follows: there should be a variety of reasons offered for nominating the schools; the schools should, as a group, provide a balanced national set; the schools should be situated in a variety of communities; there should be schools from each region: British Columbia, Prairies, Ontario, Quebec, Atlantic Canada, and the North; some French (and English) minority-language schools should be included; there should be at least one First Nations band-operated school; there should be at least four schools from the metropolitan areas (Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal); there should be rural and isolated schools; the set should include a variety of size and type of school; there should be at least one specialized school (e.g., alternative or technical school); there should be at least one high-performance academic school.

The design team believed that a set of fewer than 20 schools would not capture the diversity among Canadian secondary schools, jurisdictions, communities, and special populations (religious, linguistic and ethnic minorities). After considerable discussion it was decided not to include a private school. Several factors prompted this decision: the small number of nominations of private schools, the variety of situations and types among private schools across the country, and the difficulty of applying findings from private schools to the situation of public schools.

The next step was to obtain the permission of the school board (or other authority) and the permission of the school. This process was only completed at the beginning of October 1993, as consultations with committees, teachers and students were often involved. The final set included two schools from British Columbia, five from the Prairies (including two Aboriginal schools), five from Ontario, four from Quebec, four from Atlantic Canada, and one from the Northwest Territories. Details of the set and descriptions of individual schools are provided in the following chapter.

Studying the Schools

Between September and November 1993 the process of studying the schools began. Principal researchers were selected for each of the 21 sites; most of these researchers were on staff in faculties of education, some were senior school board administrators on leave to follow graduate programs and some were independent researchers hired on contract. The design team now became the co-ordinating committee of the project; some of the members acted as regional co-ordinators and most of the members were also principal researchers for a site. In all, the project involved 21 principal researchers, 42 other researchers and graduate students who assisted them, and 11 universities across Canada. (See Appendix B.)

Research Activities

In September, research protocols were developed and sent to researchers. Their purpose was to ensure some measure of consistency in approaching the five research questions and the study of the schools. These protocols dealt with the kinds of documents to be collected, types of observations, handling of interviews and focus groups, people to be interviewed, and suggestions about the kinds of questions to be asked of various groups, such as administrators, teachers, students, parents, and community representatives. The research teams studied these protocols and adapted them to the particular situation and time available.

Between September and November, each team engaged in field work in the school. The general pattern of field research was a few short visits and a minimum of ten days of study in the school, either in a block or distributed over the term.

A first meeting of researchers took place over four days in December 1993 in Toronto, bringing together over 30 researchers from all 21 schools to discuss progress, identify difficulties, and prepare for the next stage of the project. Each team prepared a five-page progress report dealing with initial impressions and tentative responses to the five research questions. The co-ordinating committee underlined the national character of the study, emphasizing that it was more than a collection of 21 individual case studies. Discussions took place about emerging patterns across schools, and researchers obtained feedback on their progress reports. In addition, some national policy issues were identified.

A second period of field work, also a minimum of ten days, took place between January and March 1994. Between January and April, a team of Jane Gaskell (chair of the co-ordinating committee), Patrick Fleck (project director), and Norman Henchey (liaison with Human Resources Development Canada, the new name for Employment and Immigration Canada) visited all the schools in the study, talked with people in the schools, and met with researchers. This reinforced the national character of the project and gave the team first-hand experience of the schools and their communities.

Preparing the Case Studies

Drafts of the case studies were prepared and a second meeting of researchers was held in May in Montreal. At this meeting, the draft case studies were discussed in small groups, feedback was provided, and consideration was given to the structure and content of the final report.

Following this meeting, guidelines were distributed for the preparation of the final versions of the 21 case studies. The reports were due on August 31, 1994, in both hard copy and diskette; their length was to be approximately 45,000 words, 100-150 pages of text; each case study would include a general introduction to the project, a box of key facts about the school, a three- to five-page executive summary, and an appendix on methodology. There were general suggestions about the balance between observational data and interviews, between discussion of context and the internal life of the institution, and between description and analysis.

The case studies were submitted to a number of reviews, first by the regional co-ordinator (member of the co-ordinating committee), then by another member of the co-ordinating committee not involved with the school. All the case studies were then submitted to two panels of external reviewers, one involving 14 academics and researchers not associated with the project, a second using ten administrators and policy makers. Their reports and recommendations were studied by the co-ordinating committee in October 1994, feedback was provided to the principal authors of the case studies, and recommendations for changes were made. When the final reports were submitted, they were again reviewed by two three-person panels, including one member of the co-ordinating committee, one for French reports and one for English reports. Review comments were submitted to the co-ordinating committee.

Data from Statistics Canada

While the study of the schools was progressing, a second initiative was begun. With financial support from the Innovations Program of Human Resources Development Canada, a request was drawn up for submission to Statistics Canada for data related to the catchment areas served by the 21 schools. The purpose of this request was to collect some quantitative data on the demographic and economic characteristics of the communities from which the schools drew their students, to test the usefulness of such data for school research, and to contribute to a permanent archive of the project. The request involved defining the catchment area of each school in terms of census geographies, identifying the most significant variables, constructing tables of cross-tabulation of variables, and identifying potentially significant characteristics and patterns.

Nineteen catchment areas were identified (the city of Toronto was used for two schools and no census data were available for one site), to which were added Canada and the provinces/territories to make a total of 32 areas. Nine customized tables, based on the 1991 census data, were prepared permitting cross-tabulations of general demographic characteristics of the total population (e. g., home language, religion, ethnic origin), educational and occupational characteristics of the population 15 and over (level of schooling, type of occupation, income), and characteristics of census families (e.g., family type, income). Statistics Canada also provided additional data on families (e.g., economic dependency), as well as general health, crime, and education statistics for Canada and the provinces.

Unfortunately, while some of the raw data were available early in 1994, much of the detailed summary and analysis of this information was completed only in August 1994 as the final drafts of reports were being prepared, and its contribution to the case studies was at best modest. A summary report was prepared (September 1994) and the data are deposited in the archives of the project.

Material Produced

From its conception, the Exemplary Schools Project had two purposes: to do research on what makes secondary schools successful and to relate the results of this research to educational policy and practice. These purposes implied a number of different outcomes:

- Case studies of individual schools, to provide descriptions and analysis of specific institutions, environments, challenges and practices (see Appendix B);
- A national report, which would describe the overall study, analyze patterns across the country, identify similarities and differences, and suggest implications for further research, policy development, and practice;
- Project archives, in the custody of the Canadian Education Association, to give researchers and other professionals an opportunity to consult data accumulated during the project and to develop the analysis further; these archives include transcripts of interviews and observations of the researchers in each school, documents provided by the schools, and data from Statistics Canada obtained for the project;
- A thirty-minute video, in English and French, showing highlights of eight of the schools, six English and two French, produced by Focus Productions of Toronto, to provide public exposure to the schools of the project;
- Other products, including presentations at professional and scholarly meetings, publications in journals, and shorter pieces on specific aspects of the project, to extend information about the project and encourage follow-up of the work.

Approaches to the Subject

There are many approaches to defining what constitutes "good" or "successful" schools, finding evidence to identify them, and analyzing the characteristics associated with being good or successful.

King and Peart (1990) summarize the outcomes or objectives associated with a good school in various research studies. These include high level of academic achievement; few discipline, attendance or delinquency problems; high student and teacher satisfaction; serving the needs of all students; high proportion of students graduating; students prepared for the next phase of life; smooth transition to work or post-secondary education; highly developed thinking and communication skills; self-motivated graduates with initiative and ability to use information; positive relationships within the school; a sense that goals are shared; strong and positive school climate or culture.

Researchers differ in where they look for indicators of success. Rutter and associates in Britain (1979), Coleman and Hoffer (1987), Chubb and Moe (1990), and Bryk, Lee, and Holland (1993) in the United States compare schools on the basis of external, quantified data (test results, survey results, activities of students after they left school) and attempt to correlate these with school variables such as size, structure, and resources. Other researchers rely more on qualitative data, observations, interviews, and case studies, for example Lightfoot (1983), Boyer (1983), Sizer (1984) and Goodlad (1984). Other studies deal with specific issues of Aboriginal schools and minority students.

An extensive review of the research on the organization of effective secondary schools was conducted by Lee, Bryk and Smith (1993). They found that the literature reflects two quite different views of schools: schools as formal organizations with structures, roles, and rules (what might be called a sociological perspective), and schools as small societies and cultural sites with a focus on relationships and norms for cultural membership (what might be called an anthropological or ethnographic perspective). Finally, McLaughlin and Talbert (1993) draw our attention not only to the characteristics of schools but also to the various levels of context in which these schools are embedded.

Our Framework of Analysis

At the beginning of this research project on exemplary secondary schools in Canada, we had consciously avoided choosing any particular construct or theoretical framework to study the schools in terms of a definition of success, the evidence of success, and the factors that promote success. We identified broad areas that we would examine (for example, nature of the community, programs and processes, roles of teachers and students, language, patterns of interaction), but we allowed those involved in schools to say, by their perceptions (through interviews and documents) and their practice (through our descriptions and cross-referencing of perceptions) what success meant for them, how they knew they were successful, what factors contributed to this success, and what obstacles and challenges they encountered.

The purpose of this national report is to reflect on these portraits of schools and the themes that emerge, considering them in the light of current policy discussions about education in Canada.

Chapter 3

The Schools

Characteristics of the Set

THE 21 SCHOOLS were selected on the basis of three general criteria: (1) geographic distribution, to ensure that a variety of provincial and territorial jurisdictions were included; (2) type of community served, to ensure coverage of metropolitan, urban, and rural contexts; (3) school characteristics, to ensure that the group included schools of different sizes, organizational patterns, and types.

The set includes schools in nine provinces and one territory (Figure 1 and Table 1, pp. 27-29). These schools were selected as a national set to provide a cross-section of Canadian schools and a variety of school types. No suggestion is made that a school or group of schools within a particular province or territory is representative of the schools of that region.

A second criterion for selecting the schools was the type of community served (Table 2, p. 30). Some schools are situated in metropolitan areas and serve an ethnically and linguistically diverse clientele; examples are Vancouver Technical, Georges Vanier (North York), Centennial (suburban Montreal) and Jeanne-Mance (central Montreal). Other urban and suburban schools such as

Balfour (Regina), Kildonan East (Winnipeg), St. Benedict (Cambridge, Ont.), Les Etchemins (Charny, Que.), Népisiguit (Bathurst, N.B.) and Sydney (N.S.) serve a student population with less diversity in language and ethnic background. Another five schools serve small, relatively homogeneous rural communities: New Norway in Alberta, Pain Court, a French-language community in Ontario, Appalaches in Quebec, Hartland in New Brunswick, and Grandy's River in Newfoundland.

A final set of schools serves a specific clientele. Peguis, Joe Duquette and Qitiqliq serve Aboriginal students in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories respectively; Langley Fine Arts, Contact and Corktown (a pseudonym) are alternative schools serving students with particular interests.

Some schools draw their students from a catchment area with well-defined boundaries and educate most of the students within it. This is the case with certain urban schools such as Vancouver Technical, and with rural schools such as New Norway, Appalaches, Grandy's River and Qitiqliq. In most cases, school boundaries are less clearly defined and more permeable: the schools compete for students with other schools or other school boards in the same community, and students may come to the school from outside the community. Alternative schools (Langley Fine Arts, Joe Duquette, Contact, Corktown) are a special case, open to all students within the territory of the school board (Table 2, p. 30).

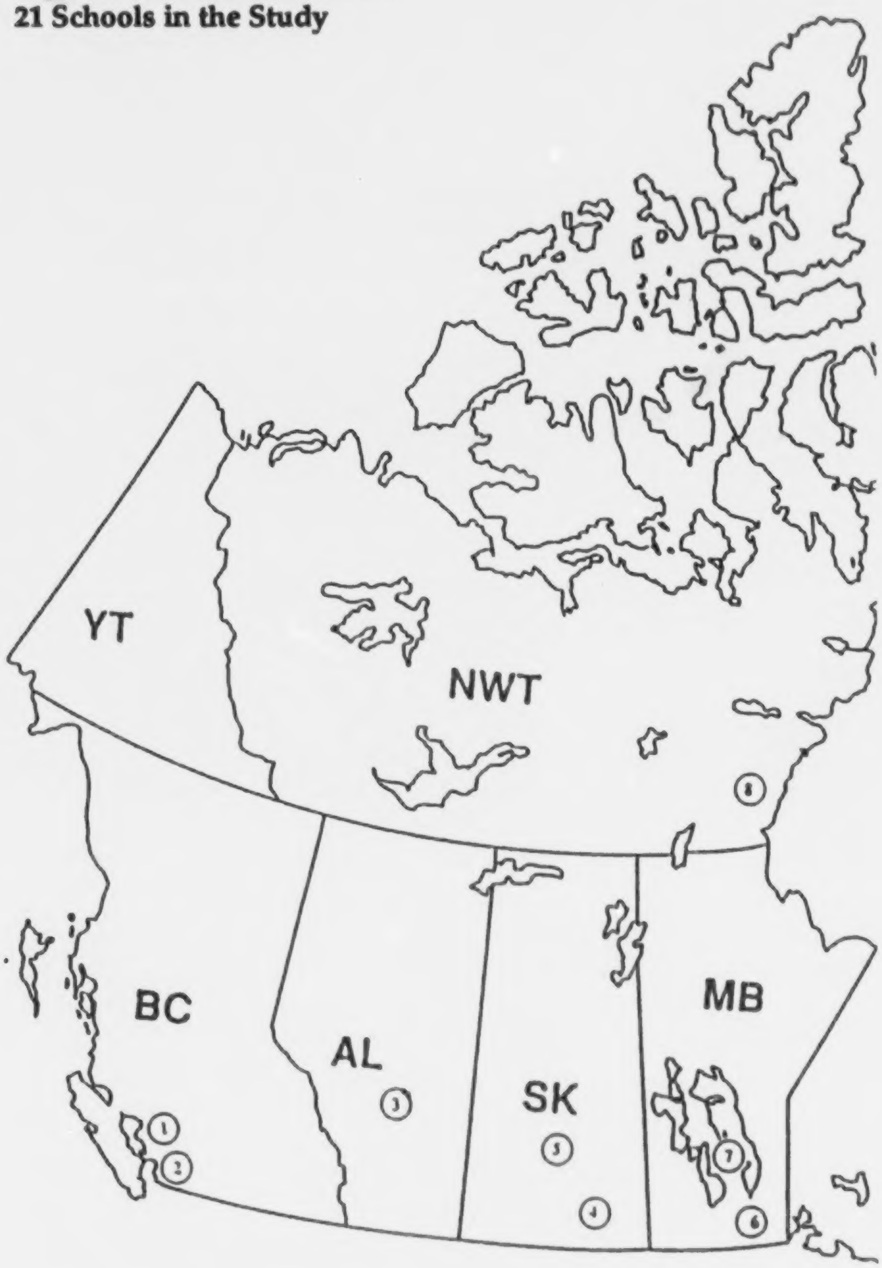
Some schools serve a distinct sub-population of a community. These include St. Benedict (the Catholic population of Cambridge), Pain Court and Népisiguit (in general, the French-language population of Kent County in Ontario and the Bathurst region in New Brunswick, respectively), and Centennial (officially, the non-Catholic population who qualify for English schooling in Quebec in various communities south of Montreal).

There are important variations in the economic characteristics of the communities, based on 1991 census data, although none would be considered wealthy or upper middle-class. Judged on the level of employment income for the male population 15+, six areas have average incomes over $30,000 and five average incomes under $23,000.

Table 1. Geographic Distribution of Schools

Province	Location	Name of School
British Columbia	Vancouver Langley	Vancouver Technical Secondary School Langley Fine Arts School
Alberta	New Norway	New Norway School
Saskatchewan	Regina Saskatoon	Balfour Collegiate Joe Duquette High School
Manitoba	Winnipeg Peguis Reserve	Kildonan East Collegiate Peguis Central School
Ontario	Cambridge North York Toronto Toronto Pain Court	St. Benedict Catholic Secondary School Georges Vanier Secondary School Contact School Corktown Community High School École secondaire de Pain Court
Quebec	Montreal Ste-Justine Charny Greenfield Park	École secondaire Jeanne-Mance La polyvalente des Appalaches École secondaire Les Etchemins Centennial Regional High School
New Brunswick	Bathurst Hartland	École secondaire Népisiguit Hartland High School
Nova Scotia	Sydney	Sydney Academy
Newfoundland	Burnt Islands	Grandy's River Collegiate
Northwest Territories	Arviat	Qitiqliq Secondary School

Figure 1. Distribution of the 21 Schools in the Study


YT
NWT
⑧
BC
MB
AL
SK
③
①
⑤
⑦
②
④
⑥

1 Vancouver Technical Secondary School (Vancouver, BC)
2 Langley Fine Arts School (Langley, BC)
3 New Norway School (New Norway, AB)
4 Balfour Collegiate (Regina, SK)
5 Joe Duquette High School (Saskatoon, SK)
6 Kildonan East Collegiate (Winnipeg, MB)
7 Peguis Central High School (Peguis, MB)
8 Qitiqliq Secondary School (Arviat, NT)
9 École secondaire de Pain Court (Pain Court, ON)
10 St. Benedict Catholic Secondary School (Cambridge, ON)
11 Georges Vanier Secondary School (North York, ON)
12 Contact School (Toronto, ON)
13 Corktown Community High School (Toronto, ON)
14 École secondaire Jeanne-Mance (Montréal, QC)
15 Centennial Regional High School (Greenfield Park, QC)
16 École secondaire Les Etchemins (Charny, QC)
17 La polyvalente des Appalaches (Ste-Justine, QC)
18 École secondaire Népisiguit (Bathurst, NB)
19 Hartland High School (Hartland, NB)
20 Sydney Academy (Sydney, NS)
21 Grandy's River Collegiate (Burnt Islands, NF)

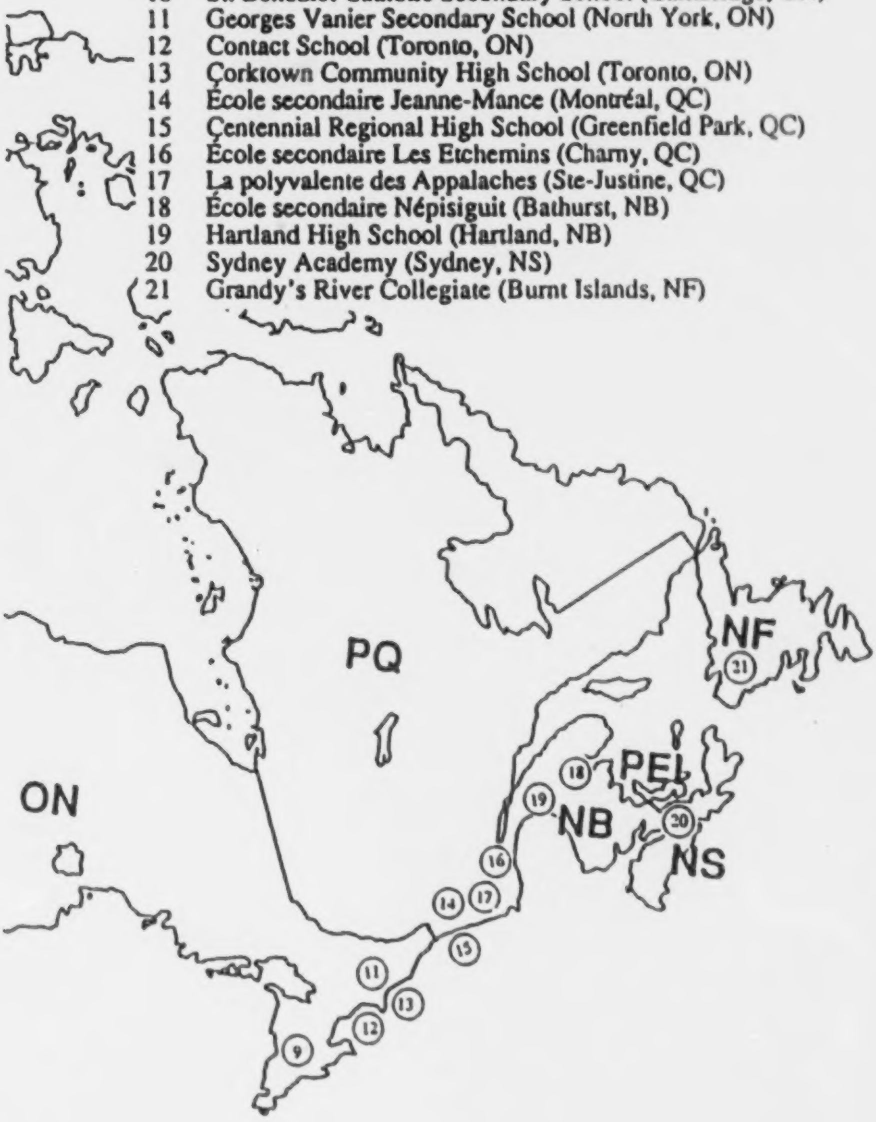


Table 2. Communities Served by the Schools

Province	School	Area
British Columbia	Vancouver Tech Langley Fine Arts*	East Vancouver District Of Langley
Alberta	New Norway	Five villages in east-central Alberta
Saskatchewan	Balfour Joe Duquette*	East-central and southeast Regina First Nations population of Saskatoon
Manitoba	Kildonan East Peguis	Northeast Winnipeg Peguis Reserve north of Winnipeg
Ontario	St. Benedict Georges Vanier Contact* Corktown* Pain Court	Catholics in eastern half of Cambridge Part of North York City of Toronto City of Toronto French-language population of Kent County**
Quebec	Jeanne-Mance Appalaches Les Etchemins Centennial	South-central Montreal 11 villages south of Quebec City 12 municipalities near Quebec City English-language population south of Montreal
New Brunswick	Népisiguit Hartland	French-language population of Bathurst region Hartland and environs, Saint John River Valley
Nova Scotia	Sydney	Sydney and Louisbourg, Cape Breton
Newfoundland	Grandy's River	Burnt Islands and Rose Blanche outports
Northwest Territories	Qitiqliq	Arviat on western shore of Hudson Bay

* These schools serve students throughout the territory of the board.

**More precisely, a school operated by the Roman Catholic separate school board serving French-language students and others able to follow the program. Most would be Catholic.

Table 3. Characteristics of the Schools

Province	School	Type of Program	Grades	No. of Pupils	No. of Tchrs
British Columbia	Vancouver Technical	Comprehensive	8-12	1, 729	108
	Langley Fine Arts	Alternative	1-12	*290	*27
Alberta	New Norway	Academic	1-12	*106	*15
Saskatchewan	Balfour	Academic	9-12	962	50
	Joe Duquette	Alternative	9-12	170	11
Manitoba	Kildonan East	Comprehensive	10-12	1, 200	74
	Peguis	Academic	N-12	*230	*21
Ontario	St. Benedict	Comprehensive	9-OAC	1 050	67
	Georges Vanier	Comprehensive	10-OAC	1 454	119
	Contact	Alternative	9-12	140	11
	Corktown	Alternative	10-OAC	114	7
	Pain Court	Academic	9-OAC	209	22
Quebec	Jeanne-Mance	Academic	7-11	1, 519	92
	Appalaches	Academic	7-11	573	38
	Les Etchemins	Academic	9-11	2, 211	137
	Centennial	Academic	9-11	1, 850	115
New Brunswick	Népisiguit	Comprehensive	10-12	1, 333	70
	Hartland	Academic	6-12	400	23
Nova Scotia	Sydney	Academic	10-12	1, 046	59
Newfoundland	Grandy's River	Community	7-12	240	15
Northwest Territories	Qitiqliq	Community	7-12	210	14

*Secondary level only in combined elementary-secondary schools.

Using the indicator of unemployment rates for young people between the ages of 19 and 24, four communities have rates of 10 per cent or less and three have rates over 20 per cent.

Finally, the schools show a wide range of characteristics (Table 3, p. 31). They range in enrolment from Les Etchemins with 2,211 students to New Norway with 106 students in secondary school. Nine of the schools have over 1,000 students and ten have enrolments under 500. Three schools are combined elementary and secondary institutions (Langley Fine Arts, New Norway, and Peguis) and some include only senior secondary grades (Les Etchemins, Népisiguit), but the majority offer the full range of secondary grades as defined by the province or territory. Most of the schools offer primarily academic programs and a number (e.g., Vancouver Technical, Balfour, Kildonan East) have evolved from technical high schools to become comprehensive or academic (collegiate) institutions. Five are comprehensive schools: Vancouver Technical, Kildonan East, St. Benedict, Georges Vanier and Népisiguit. Two schools, Grandy's River and Qitiqliq, serve isolated communities.

The Schools

This an introduction to the individual schools, providing brief details about the community being served, the characteristics of the school, its distinctive features, and some reasons why it was nominated and included in the study. More details about individual schools are provided in other chapters of this report, and a complete description and analysis is found in the individual school case studies.

Vancouver Technical Secondary School

> *All schools have to move into the 21st Century, and Van Tech will do that because of all these different programs. Because obviously the students' needs can't be met by a single curriculum; their needs are too diverse for that. (Vancouver employer)*

Vancouver Technical serves an historically working-class area in the east end of Vancouver, extending to the border of

Burnaby. The population is growing, increasing by 30 per cent between 1986 and 1991; it is also a diversified community, with half the people having a mother tongue other than English or French and two-thirds an ethnic origin other than British or French (42 per cent of the students of Vancouver Technical were born outside Canada in 46 different countries). The community is poor (80 per cent of children come from low-income families) but has recently begun to become more middle-class.

The school was founded in 1916 and the present building constructed in 1928. It is a large comprehensive school: over 1,700 students, an area of 30,000 square meters, 22 acres of land, 100 classrooms, technical shops and laboratories, plus specialized facilities including a cafeteria, gymnasia, and an auditorium. Vancouver Technical has "turned itself around" in the past six years from being a school with a reputation as undemanding, dangerous, and catering to non-university-bound students to one with improved retention rates, competition, and success in examinations. Almost 60 per cent of the graduates now go on to post-secondary studies.

Vancouver Technical has many distinctive features, all directed to providing a variety of structures and services to meet the diverse needs of its students, create a sense of community within the school, and promote school success. These initiatives include a Core-8 Grouping, a form of middle-school structure; schools-within-a-school, a variety of "mini-schools" for particular clienteles (gifted, self-motivated, at-risk students, First-Nations students); and an extensive program in English as a second language .

The school is worthy of study in its approach to change and innovation, its respect for cultural diversity, and its continuing discussions about the dilemmas of elitism vs. inclusion, adapting to needs vs. fostering a sense of community, and encouraging success and achievement vs. encouraging self-confidence and effort.

Langley Fine Arts School

> *Here the purpose of the school isn't to raise up musicians or artists. If some of that happens, then great, but that's not the purpose. The purpose is to expose kids to another world, broaden their awareness.* (Teacher, Langley Fine Arts School)

Langley Township is a rapidly growing semi-rural community an hour's drive east of Vancouver. It is a relatively young, homogeneous and conservative community with a strong interest in the arts and a well-known music school. The Langley Arts Council, which was instrumental in founding the Langley Fine Arts School, has close to 4,000 members. The Langley school district is distinctive in its commitment to school-based budgeting and management and to alternative programs.

The school was established in 1985 as an alternative school with emphasis on fine arts, open to students from anywhere in the district or beyond (nine current students are from Japan). An old junior high school building has been converted and 16 portable classrooms added; a new building has been approved by the Ministry of Education. It is a combined elementary/secondary school, which has been evolving one year at a time and now has a complete program to grade 12; there are just under 300 students at the high school level. An estimated 40 per cent of graduates will go immediately to post-secondary education, 35 per cent to work.

The most distinctive feature of the school is that fine arts (drama, dance, music, visual arts) form half of the program and the schedule. The emphasis is less on the training of performers than on the contribution of the arts to general education, and efforts are made to integrate arts with academic subjects. It is interesting that the principal has a background in science. Although some see the school as elitist, in reality students select the school and not vice versa.

In an era that stresses scientific-technological knowledge and economic human resource development, Langley Fine Arts School is a reminder of the role of the arts in the cultivation of full human beings.

New Norway School

> Researcher: *"Well, and do you have anything you want to ask us?"*
> Student: *"What was your reaction when you first walked into the school?"*
> Researcher: *"It's a nice school."*
> Student: *"But didn't you feel it? Didn't you feel it?"*

New Norway is a village of under 300 in Camrose County in east-central Alberta. The school serves several villages with a total population under 10,000 that is relatively homogeneous and stable. Unemployment is low, most people work in farming and related occupations, and the communities are generally conservative and religious.

The first one-room log school house in New Norway was built in 1910 and the present building in 1955. By the mid-1980s the high school population had declined to 38 students but has risen since then to 106 in 1994. The increase in enrolment is due to such factors as a new administration, programs for students with special needs, renovations of the building, and especially active communication with parents and the community. The school has an informal atmosphere with close relationships among students, principal and teachers. It also has a variety of facilities: computers, microwave ovens outside classrooms, a gymnasium, and an adjacent curling rink shared with the village. The school offers an Integrated Occupational Program for students with learning difficulties. In 1995, half of the school's graduates went on to post-secondary studies.

Among the distinctive features of the school are its care and success in reconciling school policies and practices with community values and expectations, maintaining a balance between seriousness of purpose and informal atmosphere, its use of Alberta distance education services to supplement the school program, and the extensive involvement of staff in school and community activities.

If modern education systems can find a place for small schools serving small communities, adapting to their style yet preparing young people for the larger world beyond, then New Norway is a good example of such a school.

Balfour Collegiate

> *I knew that the school was really old because two generations of my family already went here .... This also used to be the school my grandma and my aunt attended as well.* (Student, Balfour Collegiate)

Balfour Collegiate is located in east-central Regina, a district with a population of 29,000. Almost everyone speaks English at home, yet four of every ten people have an ethnic origin other than

British or French. It is a well-educated community with a low rate of unemployment and a high average income.

The school was established as a technical school in 1930. Its enrolment peaked in the early 1980s, when it served as the hub of technical and vocational courses for the Regina public schools. With a current enrolment just under 1,000, Balfour occupies an elegant, three-storey, 60-year-old building, to which additions were made during the 1960s. Beginning in 1983, the school has changed from a "tough" technical school to an academic institution with a reputation for scholarships and athletics, one in which well over half of the graduates now go on to post-secondary institutions. Technical programs have declined in importance as new programs have been developed: a transitional learning centre for students with behavioural problems, a special tutorial program for teen mothers, a learning assistance program for students with learning disabilities, enriched English, and English as a second language.

Balfour is distinctive in the success it has had evolving from a technical school into a collegiate and from regular programs to programs for students with special needs, while retaining its sense of image and tradition. It is also distinguished by the high level of staff involvement in the school and its activities. It demonstrates that innovation and adaptation need not be bought at the expense of tradition and image.

Joe Duquette High School

> *The Joe Duquette High School is a healing place which nurtures the mind, body and soul of its students. The school offers a program of studies which affirms the contemporary world of Indian people. The school supports the uniqueness and creativity of the individual and fosters self-actualization in a co-operative environment.... Our focus is on healing all members of the school family. Consequently, our philosophy expects a caring, forgiving, and a believing environment.* (Joe Duquette High Handbook)

Joe Duquette draws its students from the Aboriginal population of Saskatoon, over 7,500 people, as well as First Nations students from elsewhere. The Aboriginal population is young, half of it under 18 years of age. The community has a low rate of school attendance and high rate of unemployment.

The school was established in 1980 as the Saskatoon Native Survival School. It is an alternative school operated by a tripartite structure involving a Parent Council, the Saskatoon Catholic School Board, and the Department of Education, with the Parent Council the major influence. About three-quarters of the school's 170 students are Cree, with the remainder about equally divided between Saulteaux and Métis. The mission of the school is to assist students who for a variety of reasons have not succeeded in other schools. Many special programs are offered, including healthy lifestyles, Cree language, infant day care, and after-school support circles. Ceremonies emphasizing Native traditions, spirituality and values are integral to the school culture and program.

Joe Duquette has several distinguishing features, among them its status as an alternative school for Aboriginal students within a Catholic school board, its shared system of governance, the continuing involvement of the community, the variety of support services for young people needing help, and the commitment of the staff. But it is the philosophy of Native spirituality, the regular sweetgrass and other ceremonies, the role of Elders as teachers and models, and the focus on healing and wholeness that give the school its truly distinctive quality. Because of these characteristics the school may have important lessons to teach — and not only to First Nations communities.

Kildonan East Collegiate

> *He really is enjoying the electronics and working with lights at home and doing all kinds of things ... and he seems quite enthusiastic about the whole thing. I quite like that they can do something like that and learn. Maybe when they get out of school they will have something that they can maybe go into with a job.* (Parent, Kildonan East Collegiate)

Kildonan East serves northeastern Winnipeg, an area of 18,000 that is primarily residential, with sections of light industry along with retail and service businesses. In general, it is an average working-class Canadian urban community.

The school was opened in 1970 as one of a new generation of Canadian comprehensive high schools designed to offer an extensive array of vocational, technical and academic programs. In recent years it has been making efforts to shed its tough "tech" image. The school has good facilities, a wide range of resources and technical workshops, and a variety of programs to serve the needs of its 1,200 students. It offers four programs: vocational/technical, administration/computer sciences, honours/dual diploma, academic and advanced placement. There are many students at risk, and many students travel to Kildonan from outside the normal catchment area for its special programs. Forty-five per cent of graduates go on to post-secondary institutions.

Distinctive characteristics of Kildonan East are its energy and imagination in developing programs in peer tutoring, conflict resolution, work internships, life skills, advanced placement, and Pacific Rim studies, together with its ability to attract resources and grants to support many of these programs.

Kildonan East is an example of a comprehensive high school that is energetic, entrepreneurial, and on the move.

Peguis Central High School

> *That's our primary purpose — to prepare our students so that they get out there and meet the challenges and live their dreams.* (Peguis Chief)

The Peguis Reserve in the interlake region of Manitoba north of Winnipeg is the largest reserve in the province. The Peguis Band has 5,200 registered members, 2,300 living on the reserve. Their economy depends on farming and even more on services, mainly a shopping mall and video lottery. There are significant Pentecostal and Anglican influences in the community as well as a growing commitment to Native spirituality.

The first school in Peguis was built in 1911. Since 1976 the community school has been operated by the Band Council through a school board. This is one of the first Band-operated schools in Canada. It offers a complete program from nursery school to grade 12, with 230 students at the high school level. Half of the teachers are Native. The school follows the Manitoba curriculum, adapting it in varying degrees, and adds special courses in Ojibway.

This school is distinctive primarily because of its governance by a Band Council, the experience of a First Nations community in running its own school, and the close relationship between school and community. In recent years the school and community have made special efforts to improve school attendance and retention and to place greater emphasis on First Nations issues and the Ojibway language.

Other First Nations communities consider Peguis a leading example of a Band-operated school and a model for its continuing prudence and patience in balancing Native and academic programs as well as attempting to harmonize various religious orientations in the community.

Qitiqliq Secondary School

> *Day arises*
> *From its sleep*
> *Day wakens up*
> *With the dawning light*
> *Also, you must arise*
> *Also, you must awake*
> *Together with the day which comes*
> (Inuit Song)

Qitiqliq Secondary School is situated in Arviat, a hamlet on the western shore of Hudson Bay, one of many communities known as the Keewatin region of the Northwest Territories. Originally a summer camp for inland Inuit, Arviat became a permanent community in 1959 when schooling was established. There is no access by road. Its population is 1,325, over 90 per cent of whom are Inuit who speak Inuktitut at home. Half of the community is under 18 years of age. In 1991, two-thirds of the population had moved into the community since 1986. One family in five is headed by a single parent; half of the families have five or more persons. The community's economy is based on trapping, hunting, fishing, a co-op store, construction firm, and government agencies. Employment opportunities, as normally defined, are limited. The school was constructed in the 1980s and has offered a complete secondary program (grade 12) since 1991. (There are 210 students in grades 7 to 12 and seven students graduated in 1994.) The building is attractive and well equipped and has good facilities, including a computer lab and gymnasium. There is one Inuk teacher in the high school. In 1993-94 there was a high turnover of southern teachers.

The language of instruction is Inuktitut in grades 1-3 and shifts to both Inuktitut and English in the middle grades; in high school the language of instruction is English, with Inuktitut taught as a subject. The school offers several special programs, such as Career Orientation (for those returning to school), Enterprise and Innovation (skills to create jobs), Career and Life Management, Inuktitut language, a Cultural Inclusion Program, work-study, and a planned course in wildlife management. The school offers shared care (day care) services to students with young children.

The school is distinctive because it owes its existence to a concerted community effort to have a complete high school so that young people could finish their secondary education without having to leave home. The school is distinctive, too, in how it is trying to deal with change and prepare young people for a different future, in its links with the community, the development of community-oriented programs, and a climate of openness and collaboration.

The school community is remarkable in its sensitivity and its efforts to negotiate Inuit and southern approaches to learning, in a way that young Inuit will profit from the latter without undermining an identity rooted in the former.

St. Benedict Catholic Secondary School

> *As a Christ-centred community which celebrates its diversity, the Mission of St. Benedict Catholic Secondary School is to develop within each student, the necessary skills, values and desire for learning to better themselves and transform society. This is accomplished in an innovative, challenging, and caring environment which draws upon the talents and expertise of students, staff and community.* (Mission Statement)

There are 18,000 Catholics in the eastern half of Cambridge, Ontario, in the Kitchener-Waterloo region, and it is from this community that St. Benedict draws its students. It is a growing community, composed partly of working-class people, many of whom are of Portuguese origin, and partly of commuters to Toronto. Although employment income in the area is relatively good (certainly compared with other schools in the study), economic status varies widely and substantial poverty and unemployment exist.

The school was established as a junior high school in 1962 and converted to a full high school in 1985 as a result of the extension of provincial government funding to Roman Catholic secondary schools. It now has 1,000 students, is overcrowded, and has 24 portable classrooms; a new technology wing was added in 1991 and a major building grant has been approved. The school is organized on a semester system. Approximately 25 per cent of its graduates go on to post-secondary studies, more to community colleges than university.

The distinctive characteristics of St. Benedict include its commitment to building and maintaining a warm, caring, inclusive community — the school motto "A Celebration of People" is one of the first things a visitor sees on entering the building — and its pioneer work in the Ontario initiative to destream grade 9 and develop an outcomes-based curriculum. The school has a reputation for teacher initiative, reflected in numerous innovative programs, including a special in-school program for students at risk as well as teacher-developed programs in the performing arts, special education, communications technology, and community service.

This could be considered a good example of the modern Catholic secondary school in Canada, much different in style and substance from those of a previous era, yet different from many pluralistic public secondary schools in its comfortable integration of values and spirituality into the intellectual and social life of the school.

Georges Vanier Secondary School

> *The school is very diverse from the multicultural and multiracial point of view — and also multilingual — and we've got a wide span of ages. We have students who are academic; our top scholar last year had a 94 per cent average and now is in engineering at university And then we have other kids for whom we know that success will mean getting a job when they get out of high school. It may not be too exciting a job, but it will mean success.* (Vice-principal, Georges Vanier)

The part of North York in Metropolitan Toronto served by Georges Vanier is a diverse community: students represent 80 countries of origin (the main groups are Chinese, Sri Lankan, Iranian, and Caribbean); of those born outside Canada, 75 per cent have been here fewer than six years and 60 per cent do not have

English as their first language. The community has a high level of schooling and an average income well above the Canadian average, though the school serves a largely lower-income clientele. The school board is dynamic and innovative.

Georges Vanier, a composite (comprehensive) secondary school established in 1965, is a complex institution of almost 1,500 students with a wide array of facilities, including four gymnasia, swimming pool, weight lifting room, telecommunications centre, shops, laboratories, studios, and birth control clinic. It also has a wide range of projects and programs, including a Learning Centre, peer tutoring, Pathfinder computer program, some outcome-based programs, mentoring, conflict mediation, co-op program with industry, advanced placement, and community liaison. Its enrolment pattern is an inverted pyramid with more students in the upper grades, the result of transfers into the school. An estimated 95 per cent continue their studies after high school. Unlike many other high schools, Vanier sees itself less as a family or community than as a heterogeneous educational city.

Georges Vanier is distinctive in its success in responding to a diversity of beliefs, needs, expectations and practices, in its reputation for success with hard-to-serve students, in its innovative work in telecommunications and technology (e.g., VanNet), and in the climate of safety, order, and harmony it fosters and preserves.

This is one of the large, modern, urban, diverse, efficient and innovative public education institutions so important in contemporary Canada. Many of the problems and tensions — and possibilities — experienced at Georges Vanier are, or soon will be, found in many other urban secondary schools.

Contact School

> *Most of the students who are here respect the school and each other. They know that we do things that they don't like and we make mistakes. But the bottom line is that they know that we are trying our best to have an alternative and that we're compassionate people and we try our best to do things in a good way.* (Teacher, Contact)

The ten alternative high schools in the Toronto Board of Education are open to all students in the territory of the board. In reality, the community served by Contact is the inner city of Toronto, especially teenagers and young adults who are dropouts, street youth, at risk and marginalized, mostly poor, often living alone, sometimes with health and drug-abuse problems. The community of this school is a population on the margins of the city.

The school was established 20 years ago as one of a series of alternative schools. At present it occupies the main floor of an office building in downtown Toronto, east of Yonge Street, and contains three large open areas divided by partitions (teaching area, area for street workers, science and art facilities). There is a highly mobile enrolment that stays around 150. The program includes general and advanced courses, adapted to its clientele, but not Ontario Academic Courses (OACs). The school uses flexible scheduling, individualized attention, and short-term intensive course modules. It offers a variety of innovative and practical programs on such topics as Native literature, writing a term paper, personal life management, and lesbian and gay fiction.

Contact is a distinctive alternative school whose name suggests its orientation: it is a small-school community with a clear social-service orientation. It has a community outreach program operated by street workers on the staff of the school, a philosophy of zero tolerance for racism, sexism and homophobia, democratic school government with teachers and students each having one vote, and a weekly general school meeting.

If large urban systems believe it is their duty to serve young people beyond the reach of regular schools and provide them with an alternative social service and learning environment, Contact is an important example of this model of school.

Corktown Community High School[1]

> *When I started to apply myself and to see what was going on or what was available to me, then I started to use the teachers as resources and started to see exactly how much they were willing to give, because usually when you're in a large high school, you don't use the teacher as a resource. You try not to use the teacher at all. It's not a learner- directed situation, it's very teacher-directed. So here we go, we're in a learner-directed situation and I guess I got the benefits of that.* (Corktown alumnus)

As is the case with other alternative schools, Corktown's students may come from the whole region of the Toronto Board of Education. Its clientele tends to be academically oriented and capable students interested in a more community-like environment and more opportunity for individual initiative than is found in many regular high schools.

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[1] *Corktown is a pseudonym. The staff at this school requested that the school's name not be used in the reports of the project.*

Located in an attractive Victorian brick building in downtown Toronto, Corktown began as a private school. It later became part of the public board as an alternative school that retains the scale (114 students), selective character, and academic orientation often associated with private schools. It offers only advanced-level academic courses. Seventy per cent of graduates go on to post-secondary study, and many work in the arts, media, education and social work.

Corktown is distinctive in that it is imbued with a clear humanistic philosophy of education stressing the school as community. It offers projects incorporating community service into the regular program, freedom of expression, self-government, personal autonomy, and a collaborative student-directed learning culture. It has been able to preserve a coherent philosophy and culture of learning.

École secondaire de Pain Court

> *... the vision is that we can provide a composite education for all students that will lead them to an opportunity to go into a French-language university, to prepare themselves for French-language professional opportunities and also to develop and maintain that heritage and culture as part of their tradition and to make up for opportunities that were lost to the francophone community, over a period of time.* (Former director, Kent County Board of Education)

Kent County is a rural region of southwestern Ontario with a population of 110,000, of whom about 8,500 have French as a mother tongue and 1,500 have French as the home language. Agriculture is the main sector of the economy.

The school was originally part of the public board and was later transferred to the Roman Catholic separate school board. Recent years have seen an expansion of enrolment to 200 students and of facilities (gym, classrooms, laboratories). The school has a mix of students: those who have a legal right to French-language education, those who speak French at home, those whose parents wish to preserve the French language and culture, and English-speaking students who have attended elementary French-language schools and are attracted to a small school where the language of instruction is French.

Pain Court is distinctive in its mission to preserve and enhance French language and culture in a region that is dominantly English. It has made vigorous efforts to recruit students and develop programs, enjoys a reputation for academic success, and has devised a strategic development plan in partnership with the community in activities such as the creation of a park, an agricultural project, and a public library.

École secondaire de Pain Court is a clear expression of a community whose leadership is working to preserve a cultural and linguistic identity in the face of powerful forces of assimilation.

École secondaire Jeanne-Mance

> *I would really say that it's the whole life of Jeanne-Mance that makes it an exemplary school. You can see that the school is constantly trying to provide students with a sense of belonging.* (Teacher, Jeanne-Mance)

Le Plateau Mont-Royal in south-central Montreal is one of the poorest districts of the city but is rich in social and cultural mix. The population of 68,000 is ethnically diverse and highly mobile, with both a high rate of unemployment and a high level of education.

Jeanne-Mance school is an imposing concrete structure that looks more like a fortress. It was founded in 1970 as a girls' school, became co-educational in 1974, and in the early 1980s changed rapidly from a homogeneous French middle-class school to an ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse institution, providing special language programs (classes d'accueil or welcoming classes) for non-francophones required by law to attend French schools. One-third of the present 1,500 students were born outside Quebec in 71 countries (chiefly Portugal, Viet Nam, and Latin America); French Quebeckers form half of the student population. Seventy per cent of graduates go on to post-secondary institutions.

The school has worked hard to establish close ties with local community organizations, police, and cultural groups. It has devised programs related to drop-out prevention, French as a second language for immigrants, school-work transition, and students with learning difficulties, and has a computer-based system to follow up student progress and attendance.

Within the contexts of Quebec and Montreal education, Jeanne-Mance stands out as an inner-city school that obtains excellent results in Ministry of Education examinations, and as a school in which a homogeneous French teaching staff has attempted to adjust to the cultural and linguistic diversity of its students.

La polyvalente des Appalaches

> *This is a school that makes a difference.* (Researcher, Appalaches)
>
> *Aimée-Rose encouraged me a lot, several teachers also. I had to miss courses to go to the publishers and the printers, and the teachers were open to that. Then the principal made contact with the Foundation [des Appalaches] to publish my book.* (Student who published a science-fiction novel)

This school serves a rural area that includes 11 municipalities in the Lac Etchemins region south of Quebec City near the Maine border. The population of 10,000 (almost all French) is declining. The region is characterized by a relatively low level of education, low employment income, and heavy dependence on social assistance.

Although the school is called "La polyvalente des Appalaches," it is an academic high school of just under 600 students. There are good facilities (swimming pool, weight room, gymnasium, music rooms), a closely knit staff, a range of student activities, and strong discipline. Most students go on to post-secondary studies.

The distinctive features of the school are a close follow-up of student progress through a system of tutors, a staff organization according to grade level, a student-run credit union, a new-technology program, the creation of a school-community foundation to raise money for school activities, and a high degree of teacher involvement in all aspects of school and community life.

The region is in the bottom one-fifth in Quebec in terms of income; the school is one of the top four in the province in terms of high school graduation rates. This is at least one definition of a school that makes a difference.

École secondaire Les Etchemins

> *Student life is the soul of this school.* (Consensus of parents, students, teachers and administrators)

The region served by this school includes 12 suburban and rural municipalities on the south shore of the St. Lawrence River opposite Quebec City. The population of 117,000 is almost entirely French and relatively well off, with many employed in government and administrative positions.

The school occupies a large facility built 25 years ago, and it has had a tumultuous history of difficult labour relations, conflict, poor performance, and a poor reputation. In recent years it has undergone a dramatic transformation and is now much improved: it is the only senior high school in the school district and, with over 2,200 students, one of the largest secondary schools in Quebec. Its students do well on government examinations, the drop-out rate is low, and 80 per cent of graduates continue their studies.

The distinctive features of Les Etchemins include the strong personal leadership of administrators, an active student life with a wide range of extracurricular programs and activities, and a number of special programs, including enriched arts, music, science, special programs for students at risk of dropping out of school, and peer counselling.

The school is noteworthy for its success in overcoming its history and its efforts to integrate a strong department-based academic program with a socially and culturally powerful student activity program.

Centennial Regional High School

> *The principal is excellent, excellent ... you can say what you feel, you can offer your suggestions.* (Department head, Centennial)

This school's catchment area is a large, vaguely defined set of communities, including 13 municipalities, in the south shore region opposite Montreal, extending to the U.S. border. In the legal structure of Quebec education, Centennial serves the non-Catholic students eligible to attend English schools, though in fact many English-speaking Catholic students also attend. The population of the area is 156,000, 30,000 of whom have English as a home language; one-third of these have an ethnic origin other than British or French. Employment is concentrated in administrative/managerial occupations, income levels are high, and economic dependency is low.

With an enrolment of 1,850, Centennial is the largest English-language school in Quebec. It was established in 1971, part of what until recently was called a Protestant school board. At first it had a poor image, but since 1977 it has built a reputation for high quality and firm disciplinary standards. It used to be a comprehensive school but is now exclusively academic as a result of changing enrolment patterns and provincial vocational education policies. There is a high degree of cultural diversity among students and staff, and a wide range of programs and resources for both gifted students and students with learning difficulties.

Centennial is distinctive in its strong leadership, an evolving middle-school structure in grades 7 and 8, the high degree of social integration of different ethnic groups, enthusiastic staff, and one of the most attractive and well-equipped high school libraries in Canada.

This is a school in which proper deportment and conduct are expected, and good effort and achievement honoured.

École secondaire Népisiguit

> *Robotics, weather forecasting, meteorology, photography, hydraulics, computer-aided design, electronics, computer imaging, environment, computer-aided manufacturing, telecommunications, computer music, desktop publishing, seismology, video and special effects...* (Some of the 36 modules available to students in the computer-based technology laboratory)

> *There is a pride in being at ESN, mainly because of the variety of activities. The fact that the student has a good life in school gives him or her a sense of belonging and the motivation to continue striving for success.* (Teacher, Népisiguit)

Students come to Népisiguit from the French-language communities of Bathurst and eight smaller towns and villages in northeastern New Brunswick. The total population of the region is

40,000, of whom 25,000 have French as mother tongue and 22,000 French as the home language. It is an area of high unemployment, especially for young people, and low income levels; the main occupations are in mining, forestry, government, and services.

The school, opened in 1971, has an enrolment of over 1,300 in grades 10 to 12. It is well equipped, with a technology laboratory, three science laboratories, four computer labs, library, gymnasium, and specialized facilities for English, vocational areas, arts, and music. The school is characterized by a climate of innovation, openness and community and by a variety of projects, including co-operative education, closed-circuit television, and active community links. The school is distinctive as a minority French-language institution. It also stands out for its active and mature student council, which runs numerous projects, including operating the cafeteria, fund raising and management, and peer counselling. The school's technology lab, used by all students in a required technology course, is state of the art.

On the basis of the maturity of its student leadership and sophistication of its technology education alone, Népisiguit is an exceptional school.

Hartland High School

> *I feel accountable to my students. That is the main thing that motivates my decisions, although I make sure that when I do something, the desires of the superintendent and the school board are kept in mind.... But I really feel more responsibility to my students, that I should be a good role model to them, that I should work hard on their behalf.* (Principal, Hartland)

Students come to Hartland High School from the Town of Hartland and the surrounding rural region in the Saint John River Valley of New Brunswick. The population of 6,000 is almost totally English-speaking and relatively stable, with major occupations in farming, forestry and related services. This is a religious community with a traditional family structure. The area is marked by low income and a high degree of economic dependence, yet the school district is one of the most progressive in the province.

The school building was constructed in 1924 and two wings were added later. Hartland is a college preparatory school that offers its 400 students an academic program with no vocational or fine arts courses. It emphasizes high academic and disciplinary standards; 70 per cent of graduates go on to post-secondary education. Students who want vocational courses attend school in another town. The school has co-operative education and advanced placement programs, it has begun to offer Paideia seminars (see page 92) in the junior high school, and it has introduced student support strategies, such as mentoring, peer tutoring, and peer mediation.

Hartland provides insight into the process of adapting to change and introducing innovations based on current education theory and practice, in an institution and community that is traditional and conservative.

Sydney Academy

> *There has always been something associated with the name. Academy teachers — there was a certain aura about them as well. The principal who hired me was a gentleman and a scholar. He was almost a mystical figure. Many of the staff members, at that time, themselves were almost mystical figures. The teachers had a tremendous reputation for being knowledgeable, good teachers, and very demanding.* (Teacher, Sydney)

Sydney Academy draws students mainly from the communities of Sydney and Louisbourg in Cape Breton County, Nova Scotia, a region with a distinctive historical and cultural tradition. The population of the region is declining. Although virtually all the people are English-speaking, there is a fair amount of ethnic and racial diversity, with Black and Aboriginal populations being particularly significant. Historically, Sydney has been a one-industry town; it now has a high rate of unemployment (in 1991, 26 per cent of young people were unemployed), low income, high economic dependency, and a high proportion of single-parent families. Sydney Academy (known simply as "The Academy") was established in 1841 and is the oldest school in the study, although the present building goes back only to 1959. Many consider the Academy the elite secondary school of the region, as many graduates are now highly placed in government, education, and business. It has over 1,000 students and, although co-educational, there is a strong male culture among administrators and staff. The school offers a wide variety of special programs, including the international baccalaureate, multicultural education, First Nations, school re-entry, and work placement, as well as numerous extracurricular cultural and athletic activities. Half of the graduates go on to post-secondary studies.

Few would contest the description of the Academy as distinctive. It exhibits a strong sense of pride, confidence, and tradition. It has considerable influence in the larger community because of its reputation and its influential graduates, and it has an impressive record of academic, cultural, and athletic accomplishments.

Many secondary schools are trying to overcome their past but Sydney Academy stands on its history. It is attempting to adjust to changing circumstances, needs, and priorities — not always an easy process — without undermining its links to the past.

Grandy's River Collegiate

> *Everything is right down on us now. Hearing cuts here, hearing cuts there. It seems like there's nowhere to get a job now. A lot of our parents who are dealing with the fishery say you got to go somewhere because you can't end up here like me. You got to do something.* (Student, Grandy's River)
>
> *I think this is what most parents dream a school should be.* (Student, Grandy's River)

Burnt Islands and Rose Blanche are two fishing outports in southwestern Newfoundland. The combined population of 2,000 is declining, as young people leave and no one moves into the communities. You can see in these communities the effects of the collapse of the inshore cod fishery: there is high unemployment, generally low employment income, and high economic dependency.

The school has the strong sense of community and belonging usually associated with small, isolated schools. Its 250 students enjoy good physical education facilities, and the school makes efficient use of limited space. Special emphasis is placed on outdoor activities and sports, physical education, leadership skills, the environment, and global issues. About two-thirds of graduates attend post-secondary institutions.

The school is distinctive in the emphasis on global issues in an isolated school — a result of the interests of the principal — a strong sense of community attachment, and good results on government examinations.

The school is sensitive to its dilemma: encouraging a sense of community identity in young people while preparing them to study, work, and make their lives somewhere else.

These, then, are the schools we have chosen to study — not perfect schools, not without problems, not necessarily the best or the "most exemplary" schools in Canada. But they are exemplary in the sense that each one has something to say about the situation of secondary education in Canada in the mid-1990s and something to offer to other schools across the country about the many effective ways of helping adolescents respect and achieve success.

Chapter 4

What Counts as Success: The Currency of Schooling

> *Education is the very lifeblood of society, sustaining our endeavours and shaping our prospects.* (Economic Council of Canada, 1992)

> *It's getting students prepared to enter the next phase of their life and it's partly skills, partly values. Not everyone has the ability to go on into higher education, so they've got to know their capabilities and be satisfied with them.* (Teacher, Georges Vanier)

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION is a recognition of achievement that brings out the community in celebration. Government advertisements communicate to young people the importance of staying in school. Employers link the economic prospects of the country to the adequacy of the school system. Labour markets tend to reward those with more education, providing them with jobs more often and paying them higher wages.

But what does a high school diploma represent? Most Canadians spend little time inside secondary schools observing what is taught, what students learn, what is rewarded and encouraged. This study was designed to take a look inside, to explore what counts as success "on the ground." In this chapter, we report the expectations of the various communities we studied for schooling, and the ways schools articulate and monitor what it takes for a student to succeed. We conclude that, across the nation, the pressure to graduate from high school and go on to post-secondary education is increasing, particularly for economic reasons. We also conclude that the indicators of success that all schools use to decide whether students should graduate include attendance patterns, student behaviour, and grades. These indicators are meant to capture a wide range of competencies, both social and academic. At the most general level, all schools in this study want the same things: for students to come to school, to behave well while there, and to get good marks on their academic work. The particular meaning each indicator has reflects the particularities of the social, economic and cultural makeup of each community and school.

The relationship between the local community and the school is central to our study. One way of understanding schooling is as an exchange: schooling is a valuable currency. The value of schooling for individuals is the opportunity for better jobs and income; for communities, the opportunity for development; and, for the larger society, the production of skilled and competent citizens and workers. The value of schooling is rooted in the belief that what schools teach is fundamental for young people and for the country as a whole. The value of schooling also lies in its promise of equal opportunity — that all young people, whatever their sex, language, economic or cultural background, have an opportunity to learn in schools and to receive the credentials that come with school success. In a country where adults experience large discrepancies in wealth and opportunities, this belief in an equal chance for the young sustains an open and democratic society. If public schooling is to continue to have high value, young people, parents, communities, and the larger public must be convinced that these credentials and skills are worth investing in.

The currency exchanged is a complex bag of competencies with moral, social, affective, and cognitive components. People define success in school as a combination of social and intellectual competencies, and that combination is articulated in mission statements and in teachers' descriptions of what they reward. Academic learning is very important. But schools try to teach much more than the academic. Businesses, parents, and democratic societies want much more than the academic. The Conference Board of Canada's "employability skills" include academic skills (the ability to communicate, think, learn), personal management skills (positive attitudes and behaviours, responsibility, adaptability), and teamwork skills (the ability to work with others, respect them, lead). Canada needs active, responsible citizens and family members as well as workers.

Schools are called upon to do it all. Attitudes count as well as knowledge; skills involve learning the curriculum and contributing to a smoothly functioning social environment in the school. Attendance policies and school rules are as formalized and important as exams and classroom learning. The different meanings of success are not neatly separated out, but shape each other. The "good student" is a contributing citizen who works hard and learns what is taught. Creating a dynamic interplay between the social and the intellectual in the interest of learning is a dilemma for schools, and there is no single or simple way to solve it. The schools in this study offer different approaches adapted to different contexts.

Schooling and Opportunity

> *Neither one of my parents completed their high school education, but they feel that education is very important. Even though they are very successful at what they're doing, they feel, in today's society and in the future, you aren't going to be able to go anywhere without school.* (Student, New Norway)

Graduation from high school represents opportunity for young people from Grandy's River to Vancouver Technical, from Qitiqliq to Jeanne-Mance. Schools are seen as a vehicle — perhaps the most important vehicle — in our society, for opening up social and economic opportunities for a new generation. They promise a better future. It is therefore not surprising that parents and students emphasize the economic value of schools. Employment opportunities and income levels are seen to be at stake. These case studies demonstrate how social and economic changes are making education even more important to young people across the country. In some communities this is recent. In others, where students have long been urged to do well at school, the number of students heeding the message is increasing and the competition for grades and places in post-secondary institutions is intensifying.

The symbolic and social importance of graduation is marked in these high schools again and again. The graduation ceremony at Grandy's River is held well before the end of the school year, before the reality of exam results can spoil the celebration for some. It is "not really about academic success....Instead, it is more a rite of passage, an initiation into adulthood." Graduation affirms community at the same time as it affirms the success of a new generation. It marks social as well as academic achievements.

The importance of graduation is not just symbolic and social. In Rose Blanche and Burnt Islands, the communities from which Grandy's River draws its students, the economic value of school credentials is suddenly pressing. The men and women in the community used to earn a living in the cod fishery. These jobs demanded plenty of skill and knowledge, but not the kind transmitted in schools. Although some students graduated and pursued professional careers, many boys left school when they were physically able to join their fathers on the fishing boats. Both men and women found work in the fish-processing plants. Many men went to the Great Lakes to work on bulk-cargo carriers for the six to eight months the waters are ice-free. Few people with high school education remained in town, usually teachers and the occasional provincial bureaucrat or businessperson. The community was relatively well off, although few had completed high school. When the cod fishery disappeared, however, there were no longer jobs that could be learned outside the schoolhouse.

> *It seems like there's nowhere to get a job now. A lot of our parents who are dealing with the fishery say ,"You got to go somewhere because you can't end up here like me. You got to do something."* (Student, Grandy's River)

> *I know one thing, if there were jobs here now and I knew I could get out of school and get a job, I'd be gone tomorrow....I need it [high school graduation] now, but before, if the fishery was still good I'd be gone just to get a job....Now there's nothing out there. There's no other choice but to get an education , so that's why I'm going to do it.*
> (Student, Grandy's River)

Young people are urged to stay in school, even though their parents didn't. In 1993, 41 students out of the 44 in grade 12 graduated from Grandy's River. The federal aid package to Newfoundland emphasizes formal education in the community colleges for those no longer employed in the fishery. Young people who want similar training must complete high school and compete with their parents for places at college. In Grandy's River, measures of academic achievement have taken on new importance. This new focus was an important reason Grandy's River was nominated for this study. Because most parents do not have a high school education themselves and the community has neither computer hookups nor a public library, teachers at the school have become a critical link with knowledge and labour markets outside the community. In this environment, more females than males are taking academically challenging courses and completing senior high school. The importance of schooling threatens to shift the gender base of economic power in the community.

In Hartland also, the graduation ceremony is one of the year's biggest events. Everyone stops to acknowledge the members of the graduating class. It is a time of great celebration, a time to recognize students' accomplishments and wish them well. It is a prestigious occasion, full of pomp and ceremony, that unites the town.

> *Graduation night you can't get a seat , the place is so full. You're fortunate if you get an invitation to graduation. Almost every year, without fail, there will be one student that wins seven, eight, or nine scholarships.* (Resident, Grandy's River)

Unlike Grandy's River, Hartland has graduated most of its students for years. Like Grandy's River, however, it graduates more young women than young men. It is described as a "college prep" school, grooming good students for university and further success. A former premier of New Brunswick, Richard Hatfield, was an alumnus. Evidence of poverty, however, exists just outside the town boundaries. Today, the school feels pressure to teach a broader range of students in grades 10 to 12. Parents of the "socially poor, at-risk kids" who used to go to a different school are pressing for their children's inclusion at Hartland. Class distinctions that used to frame the provision of opportunity are being questioned by the school board. Providing educational opportunities for a broader range of students is the new challenge for the school.

At Peguis, schooling has taken on new importance in response to the economic development of the community. This Band-operated school is on a reserve a couple of hours' drive north of Winnipeg. The Peguis Band is taking steps to move out of its century-long dependence by opening a shopping mall, seeking control of its own skilled trades, and trying to support the education of its own doctors, lawyers, and business people. Here economic change and opportunity are interpreted in terms of the economic development of the Band as a whole, rather than just the mobility of individuals.

> *There has been a significant level of development in this community, in terms of economic development, social development....We've made some significant changes in education to make it more interesting and more relevant to the needs of our students, but the other benefit to all those opportunities...is...that it gave people hope and confirmed that things could change...that they could improve the quality of life, opportunities and the outlook for the future.* (Chief, Peguis Band)

Parents and students express concerns about their economic chances in the wider world as well as at home. Individual and collective development are not seen as incompatible. Educational development at Peguis is taken to mean good marks, graduation, and the ability to complete further schooling.

> *I have a child who is seven years old. When she's finished grade 12, I want her to be able to go on to training...and I want her to be able to go out there and have the skills to enter any college or university that she wants to, or trades.* (Parent, Peguis)

> *I view the numbers that we've graduated and indeed the number that we've had and built up in post-secondary as an indication that we're doing a pretty good job. In terms of Indian schools, I think we're probably one of the better ones in Canada.* (Superintendent, Peguis)

The chief links the development of his people to an increased standard of education. He ensures there is strong leadership and a close connection between schooling on the reserve and schooling in the white community, where post-secondary opportunities lie. He worries about the students who go to Winnipeg to stay with relatives and find school there too difficult. He wants more Native students to achieve the levels of schooling their white counterparts have had for years.

Arviat, the site of Qitiqliq Secondary School, is a community where formal schooling is a relatively new phenomenon. A school was first established there in 1959 but it only got under way in the mid-1960s. Grade 12 was offered for the first time in 1990. According to a 1989 labour force survey, approximately 79 per cent of the Aboriginal population in the Keewatin region where Arviat is located have education levels of grade 9 or less. Qitiqliq Secondary School stands largely as a cultural import, where courses are taught in English by teachers from the south, using the Alberta curriculum.

> *There's a segment of the population who do not support education and whose children do not attend school. They are difficult to reach and represent a subculture within the community.* (Vice-principal, Qitiqliq)

The economic payoff from schooling is not so clear to people in Arviat. Unemployment stands at 80 per cent. Of those 780 residents who reported an income in 1991, 555 had less than a secondary education. They earned an average of $11,840. Young people want to stay in the hamlet, and their families want to keep them there. The chair of the Keewatin Board of Education, herself an Inuk educated partly in the south, says that when students are in school, they start thinking about what they are going to do when they finish because there are no jobs.

However, some local people are pushing for the kind of community development that depends on a population educated in the ways of both south and north. The community economic development officer says people have ideas for businesses, but not enough education to operate them. She hopes that "...if they have a son or daughter or nephew coming up through the school who will get these skills, then we will have a viable business on the way."

The creation of the new territory of Nunavut is also seen as having the potential to provide jobs. The director of the Keewatin campus of Arctic College believes that 600 to 700 jobs will be created in the Northwest Territories to handle land claims. Positions of this type now require two years of post-secondary education and several years of job experience. Shifts in the possibilities for employment make education more important, while cultural links with the south, which are increasing, make the linguistic and social competencies learned in school more relevant.

In small communities like Peguis and Arviat, where language, history, minority status, and lack of geographical mobility have created a collective sense of identity, the increased emphasis on schooling is articulated as community — not just individual — development. Increased knowledge, skills and education will help the community to prosper. Aboriginal young people will be able to replace non-Aboriginal incumbents in jobs, as well as develop new enterprises. Concerns that educated young people might be unemployed are thereby reduced.

In other small rural communities, like Sydney, Rose Blanche, and Ste-Justine, there is more emphasis on individual mobility than on community economic development. As a result, schooling disrupts local communities by offering young people a reason to leave. Very few students at Grandy's River think they will be living and working in the area in five years. Parents worry about their young leaving home for larger urban centres where school credentials and school-based learning are seen to be in greater demand. They lament the lack of available local jobs. Even in a community like Ste-Justine, home to Appalaches, where there is a good deal of emphasis on developing entrepreneurial talent through the credit union, the job market for francophones is limited. Economic development needs more than an educated labour force. Education allows young people to compete for better jobs, but if there is no economic development at home, this educated labour force will go elsewhere.

People in Cape Breton, where the economy is depressed, express conflicting feelings about education.

> *Education is very important here to people as a means of accomplishing something, as a means of getting out. We've had that long tradition of exporting brains. Unfortunately, not enough of the best ones ever stayed around.* (Teacher, Sydney Academy)

> *I feel very strongly about the Isle of Cape Breton....we're losing all our best people and we have been for 25 or 30 years. I know that among the people I went to school with, there were*

> *some super-intelligent people, some good workers. They're all away.... What's left are people who are disenchanted, who don't have a high education, who don't have, perhaps, the training necessary. They stay here and get involved with social assistance and UI, or they get seasonal work or whatever they can...to keep their families fed and clothed. It's tough. The guys I went to college with are out west, in Calgary, Toronto. The majority of them...are all gone. It's sad, but that's the state of affairs right now. I hope it will get better.* (Teacher, Sydney Academy)

On the other hand, some people note that the less educated also leave to find jobs. These people see education as a way of staying home.

> *I make $27,000 a year, which is hard now because of the way things are...I wouldn't be able to do that if I didn't have that careers program. I'd probably be off in Toronto with a part-time [job] somewhere getting in trouble...I'm glad I stuck it out.* (Former student, Sydney)

In larger urban communities, students and teachers also report increased competition and pressure to do well in school. Langley is a prosperous, overwhelmingly white, English-speaking community about an hour's drive from Vancouver. It is growing and its average income is higher than other communities in British Columbia. A labour-market analyst in Langley notes that local students must compete for jobs with students from around the world:

> *The youth that grew up in Fort Langley may actually end up working in Ontario, they could end up working in Japan...or in Africa. Or they might be employed by the cafe down the street from where they've grown up. But there is a very small probability that they will work in the area they grew up in.* (Labour-market analyst, Langley)

Young people in Langley expect that they will have to be mobile and compete with students from Toronto, Newfoundland, and Hong Kong. Yet they do not feel confident about their economic prospects. On career nights, employers come to the school to stress the economic use and importance of schooling. Information about escalating post-secondary requirements spreads quickly via the media and school guidance counsellors. The resulting pressure affects teachers as much as students. The district notes that some students are returning to grade 12 after graduation to improve their marks.

The school has developed a curriculum based on fine arts, but this curriculum's ability to prepare students for jobs is controversial. Although teachers are committed to the fine arts and believe they can be an advantage in the labour market, they are realistic about the limited job opportunities in the arts, the low pay, and the long working hours associated with those jobs. Many of them have moved into teaching because of the limits of earning a living as an artist, and they want their students to have a wider range of opportunities. Marks in academic subjects remain hugely important because of their assumed economic importance for the students. The principal knows that poor academic results would discourage good students from enrolling.

The increased attention to marks is also apparent in quite a different kind of community — in Bathurst, New Brunswick. Here the economy is based on mining, and the school — École secondaire Népisiguit — is francophone. The attention to education is tremendous. Although secondary school ends at grade 12, the researchers note that for the past five years, Népisiguit has not escaped the trend of having graduates return for a 13th year. These students choose to return after obtaining their academic diploma to increase their credits, improve their marks, or firm up their career choice. Financially, this seems less expensive than to enrol for a preparatory year at a college or university. In 1993-94, 52 students returned for an extra year.

At Les Etchemins, students come from relatively well-off failies in the vicinity of Quebec City. Here, it is competition for admission to the collège d'enseignement générale et professionnel (cégep) of their choice that drives students and teachers, just as it is competition for college and university places that drives students in Langley. Cégeps begin after grade 11 in Quebec. Eighty per cent of students go to a cégep, while only about 30 per cent of Langley students go on to post-secondary education (at least immediately). Entrance to a cégep has become increasingly competitive, especially in science and mathematics. Exam results are reported in the local newspaper, increasing the pressure on teachers for students to do well.

While Langley students are oriented towards North America and perhaps Asia, students from Les Etchemins are oriented towards Montreal and perhaps Europe. Students who can work only in French are faced with a more circumscribed labour market. It is also a different labour market, the vibrancy of which depends as much on political as economic forces.

In Toronto, the labour market has recently been depressed. The Ontario Premier's Council concluded that:

> *the current top-of-mind aspirations of young Ontarians are nearly wholly fixated on economic well-being and security. In 12 group discussions of the hopes, dreams and objectives of young people inside and outside the formal education system, having a well-paying job was invariably the element raised first in the hierarchy of aspirations.* (Premier's Council report, 1994)

In this climate, completing school and going on to post-secondary education seem to offer better economic opportunity. Contact is a school is downtown Toronto that serves older students who have decided to return to secondary education. These students have experienced the need for more schooling, even in low-paying jobs. One student says, "I went for training and I find a little bit of mistake – my spelling, you see – and they say, 'You have to get a little bit of help, improve your English'. "

Despite their difficulties with school, 60 per cent of Contact students plan to attend university or college.

> *I was home having babies for five years. I had to start here with no credits and now I'm on my last two credits. I plan to go to college and take an accounting course.* (Student, Contact)

Georges Vanier Secondary School is in North York, part of Metropolitan Toronto. The school is known as a school of last resort for students who are hard to serve "in both an academic and a behavioural sense." The student population is highly transient, very mixed in terms of cultural heritage and language, and primarily low-income. There are 1,000 adolescents and 500 adults enrolled, 85 per cent of whom are in English as a second language (ESL) classes.

Georges Vanier students have been particularly hard hit by the economic downturn. Although some students do despair or get angry, parents and teachers have responded with an increased emphasis on schooling as the route to opportunity for better economic chances. Parents who were interviewed define success in much the same way as teachers — some emphasize academic achievement, others the attainment of social skills. All parents, while recognizing differences in their children's abilities, state that the most important measures of success the school can provide are the skills and abilities for students to graduate and go on to satisfying and productive accomplishments.

Students have a somewhat more perfunctory view of success. Most want to "do well" academically, but some identify success simply as the attainment of credits:

> *I'm just here to get my 30 credits, my OACs and move on.... When I was younger, I thought I'd get something out of school....Now I just want my credits to graduate and go on....I think teachers have to realize that you're just here for the credits. You're not here to get along well with everyone. You just want the credits and then go where you want to go.* (Three students, Georges Vanier)

Some students claim that their parents think the school does not assign enough homework. Some students say their parents expect more of them, since "education here isn't as tough as it is at home [in India, Hong Kong, Iran]. My mom usually says that the school should tighten up and give more homework." Parents agree for the most part that standards should be kept high.

Teachers also note that students who previously might have left before graduation are now being encouraged to stay in school.

> *I know our problem today is [having to teach] 100 per cent of the kids, whereas ten years ago I don't think we needed to teach 50 per cent successfully. No one really cared, nobody liked the general-level students. They paid lip service to them, but now there is a societal need to educate 100 per cent of them.* (Teacher, Georges Vanier)

At Vancouver Technical also, a changing parent group wants schooling that will prepare students for post-secondary education. "There is a huge immigrant population at this school," a teacher explained, " Many of those people find it not in keeping with their culture to learn to do things with their hands. They want academic programs."

The immigrant population is credited with making all students in the school "more serious about going on with their education."

Local labour markets affect the relevance of education for employment, but in all these communities, with their diverse economic bases, schooling seems to be taking on increasing importance. Education is seen as an opportunity for individual, and often collective, prosperity. In more affluent communities, there is a sense that labour markets are becoming more global and more competitive and that colleges and universities now require better marks. In less affluent communities, education represents a new chance, an opportunity to join the mainstream, though perhaps with regrets because something of the local community and its more informal ways of learning may be lost.

Graduation is the school's goal for all students, and increasingly it is assumed that students will continue on to post-secondary education. Leaving school early and learning on the job is no longer considered a possibility. More jobs require a decent level of literacy. Schooling matters more, to more students. As more graduate and as spaces in institutions of further education fail to increase at the same rate, students who a few years ago were assured of acceptance if they graduated now need good marks in key academic subjects.

The goal of opportunity and prosperity for all through education is illusory without changes to the economic and social structure. Even though education probably does increase one's chances for economic prosperity, all students who obtain A's and graduate from high school will not get the employment they want. Capital and the appropriate economic infrastructures are also necessary for economic development. Other factors also influence a student's expectations for employment. Aboriginal students expect to take over local jobs held by non-Aboriginal people in Band territory or the new Nunavut. Female students do well in school but have not been able to turn this achievement into high incomes. The language students speak can make a difference to their employment prospects, and their cultural heritage can work for or against them, depending on the context. Overall, though, despite the particularities of labour markets, education is seen as an advantage. It is likely to advance someone in the labour queue; it can provide the skills that enable one to seize economic opportunities. This realization has increased the pressure on educational institutions across the country. Rising expectations create increased scrutiny, increased anxiety and, perhaps, the impetus for exploring new directions.

What Counts as Success for Students?

> *The board takes the position that education must be the means by which each student may develop physically, mentally, and morally to healthy maturity so that he or she becomes a positive contributing member of Peguis and the larger Canadian community.* (Student Handbook, Peguis)

> *The public school should encourage the harmonious development of the individual in intellectual, physical, affective, social, cultural, aesthetic and moral dimensions and should be accessible to all.* (New Brunswick Department of Education)

> *Sydney Academy strives to produce a dynamic school environment that will enable each student to develop an ability to think clearly, to communicate effectively and to make sound judgements. The Academy's mandate is to empower students with the knowledge, understanding, and skills that will enable them to reach their full potential in tomorrow's world through various programs, activities, and experiences. The school endeavours to expose students to the value of the past, the excitement of the present, and the challenge of the future. Sydney Academy aims to provide students with the awareness that tolerance, concern for others, and a sense of responsibility can empower them to make the world a better place.* (Case study, Sydney)

> *As a Christ-centred community that celebrates its diversity, the mission of St. Benedict Catholic Secondary School is to develop within each student, the necessary skills, values, and desire for learning to better themselves and transform society. This is accomplished in an innovative, challenging, and caring environment that draws upon the talents and expertise of students, staff and community.* (Case study, St. Benedict)

> *Serving the person, knowledge and action.* (Case study, Appalaches)

Schools define their goals in extremely broad terms. They are charged with developing mind and character, preparing young people for work, citizenship, and family life. They are also concerned about the day-to-day life in school. No wonder they find notions of success difficult to articulate, much less put into practice.

Although the definition of success differs from school to school — and indeed from person to person within the school — there is agreement on things schools want from students: attendance, proper behaviour, and passing grades. Schools want students to attend class; attendance is marked and regulated. Schools are custodial institutions for young people who have not yet reached what the society defines as maturity. Schools want students to behave appropriately; students who do not obey behaviour codes are chastised and sometimes suspended. Schools are the training ground for good citizenship and respectful interpersonal relations. And schools want students to achieve, to pass tests and exams. Competitive achievement is encouraged and evaluated.

Attendance

Schooling is compulsory for adolescents in all provinces and territories until the age of 15 or 16, and school budgets are tied to student enrolment. These two factors, combined with the social and economic pressures for graduation, make attendance a major concern. Report cards routinely include a record of attendance as well as achievement. Regular attendance represents a commitment to the school's norms, and provides a chance for students at least to be exposed to the knowledge they are supposed to assimilate. Attendance itself is a basic indicator of school success.

The importance of attendance is present in virtually all the case studies. At Peguis, increased attendance (from 60 to 90 per cent) is a key indicator of success, and attendance rates are reported carefully for each grade. At Sydney, students are ineligible to write examinations if they have been absent without a note from their parent or guardian for more than ten per cent of the hours of instruction. At Hartland, failure to be in class on time results in detention, and students are suspended when absences continue after parents are notified. Reinstatement may occur on appeal to the board.

Southern notions of time and punctuality are foreign to many students at Qitiqliq. Some sleep late and see little point in attending classes regularly. Regular attendance and punctuality, however, have become important goals for the school.

> *Attendance is important so that children do not fall behind the class and begin experiencing failure. It is also important so that a pattern of going to school is established. The teachers, parents, and community are working together and trying to keep the children in school.* (Board chair, Qitiqliq)

All the students interviewed at Qitiqliq mentioned lack of attendance as a factor contributing to student failures.

In large schools, keeping track of attendance is a difficult information management problem. Monitoring student attendance can become a major preoccupation that requires substantial resources. Jeanne-Mance, a school of 1,500 students, considers increased attendance a sign of its success. It serves a diverse community in a poor district of Montreal. Over 60 per cent of families with students at Jeanne-Mance do not speak French as their first language, though French is the language of instruction.

Monitoring attendance is a priority in the school's attention to students at risk, a sign to the community that the school cares about its students and takes their learning seriously. It also reflects the value the school puts on participation. The answers they received to the question, "What should one do to be considered a good student at Jeanne-Mance?", indicated to the researchers that the most important thing was making the effort to participate.

The school has developed an automated system that tracks students' attendance and telephones their parents. Teachers fill out an attendance card for every class, reporting late and absent students. The cards are then read by a scanner and a computer calls parents of absent students on weekday evenings, asking them to record a reply explaining the lateness or absence. The system reports if a line is busy or if there is no answer. It is even possible to check whose voice is on the tape (parent or child), so students staying at home cannot excuse their own absences. Every nine days, the school secretary compiles a list of absences and calls the parents. Four times a year, a list of absences is attached to the student's report cards and delivered to parents. Absences are also reported to the principal and the "grade principal" for follow-up.

Setting up this system for monitoring attendance was the primary concern of a vice-principal for a year. It involves the most up-to-date technology. Because attendance is seen as an indicator of success, the monitoring system symbolizes the concern the school has for its students' learning. The system is also a mechanism for keeping in touch with parents.

At Centennial, an anglophone school serving a diverse population in the Montreal area, the emphasis is similar. The Centennial newsletter to parents reiterates the importance of attendance as a sign of the priority of school in students' lives:

> *The government law requires that students attend classes each day when school is in session. WE WILL ENFORCE THIS LAW STRICTLY. It is, therefore, absolutely essential that parents provide a written explanation for each absence. As a matter of routine, parents may also expect telephone calls or other direct communication from the school. School attendance takes precedence over medical and dental appointments. Please plan to make appointments after school or on pedagogical days where possible.*

At Kildonan, a mechanized system for monitoring attendance has had problems. Students sometimes intercept the calls, and a number of parents express a strong dislike of the system.

At Georges Vanier, attendance is also emphasized. Grade 10 and 11 students who are late for first-period classes must line up and check in with teachers who talk to them about the importance of attendance and give them admittance slips. "We nag students so much that usually they find it easier to start coming on time," says a teacher. Two attendance counsellors are "out there on the trail every day" and get in touch with parents. Students with perfect attendance are honoured with a letter of congratulations — a sign to students and their families that "somebody cares."

At Contact, a small school where students are poor, sometimes homeless, and who have a history of not doing well in school, attendance policy is equally important. The rate of student turnover in any three-week period is 30 per cent. Keeping track of enrolment is a challenge.

> *The main problem for a lot of these students is attendance. They don't stay in school because of the problems they're*

> *having in their personal lives, ranging from welfare to housing to emotional problems ...we could offer a program [that would be] successful in our terms, but...for a lot of students that wouldn't work if there wasn't...someone they could connect with to help them keep coming to school on a daily basis. Their lives are so chaotic...that they have a streetworker to whom they report. The streetworker's main job is attendance counselling and follow-up. So the students have that person to connect with, whether they want to or not. And often they don't want to in the beginning because they're not used to it and they don't want another parent figure or institutional type of person breathing down their necks. But they soon find out that person can help them if they really want to go to school. They can help them stick it out, stick to it.* (Co-ordinator, Contact)

Attendance contracts are negotiated with students, and if attendance is not good enough, students are "taken off the rolls" — not allowed to attend.

> *Everybody knows...that if you're here and you're not doing the work, then you might as well go for a while, and let somebody else in who does want to come. I think that's an important feature of the school because it makes it easier for students to leave. You don't have to be here.* (Teacher, Contact)

The emphasis on attendance is similar at Joe Duquette. Teachers express frustration with many students' erratic appearances at school. As one teacher said: "You can talk about all the curriculum and all the healing and all the everything else, but if they're not here, you don't touch them." If attendance becomes a significant problem, students have to develop a contractual agreement with the school. If attendance is very poor, students are taken off the rolls (unless they are incarcerated, pregnant, in a treatment centre or have another important reason). Students with the highest attendance receive an award at the end of the semester, and those with perfect attendance for a month are awarded a bus pass.

At all schools, attendance counts. Attendance policies mark schools as bureaucracies, organizations where forms must be filled out and rules obeyed. They mark students as adolescents, and schools *in loco parentis*. Skipping classes is an act of rebellion and independence. Although attending is an obligation, it is also an opportunity to learn, and this opportunity can be, and is, withdrawn if a student habitually fails to attend.

Social Learning, Citizenship and Good Character

Students not only have to attend school but also have to behave responsibly as members of the school community. Students' conduct is recorded in various ways on the report cards that go home to parents. Students can be suspended if their behaviour is disruptive. Schools place great emphasis on character, attitude, morality, discipline, and respect. Appropriate behaviour varies from school to school, as do the formal and informal mechanisms meant to encourage it. In these case studies, concern with student behaviour appears in mission statements, school rules, and codes of conduct, the curriculum, the classroom, and extracurricular activities. It is omnipresent in talk about what counts as achievement. It is clear that teachers and administrators consider learning to get along with others and taking responsibility for one's own actions as inseparable from success. The expectations for students' behaviour have social and moral overtones.

In some schools, where the community is cohesive and values and expectations are shared, behaviour is not a major problem. At New Norway, the principal is proud of having no rules except a general one about respecting others. Student lockers are open, microwaves are available in the hallways for all students, and students lounge and study on the stairs. At Balfour, students sit happily in the hallways, chatting.

Things are more formal at Hartland, which, like New Norway, is situated in a small town with a fairly homogeneous community. Church attendance is high. Here there is a major emphasis on obeying rules and on the importance of good behaviour. The student handbook sets out clear rules, such as:

> *Students are expected to be courteous at all times.*
> *Students are expected to enter the building by the MAIN ENTRANCE.*
> *Keep right as you move through hallways.*
> *Students are not to loiter in the halls, stairways, and washrooms.*

Infractions are recorded and filed. The school has a formal seven-step approach to discipline, specifying when parents and the principal are to get involved and when students' privileges are suspended. If a student reaches the seventh step, he or she is suspended.

> *We do not tolerate disrespect in this school. We do not tolerate learning environments being jeopardized by misbehaviour. We expect teachers to intervene.* (Principal, Hartland)

The school does not experience much disobedience. The teachers' ideals for good behaviour, however, involve a good deal more than obeying rules.

> *We want people to go out into the world and make a difference. If we can have them do that, have them stop just thinking about their own feelings but have compassion and vision and want to make the world a better place, I think they'll have the strength to carry through the hard times, because there's a bigger role involved.* (Teacher, Hartland)

At Hartland, these values are taught by demanding courtesy in the school, encouraging respect for community values and emphasizing extracurricular activities, especially sports. Students are trained as conflict mediators, and guidance is taught to younger students in class. The school is described as a "safe and friendly place," where students are treated fairly.

In more diverse, changing communities, consensus on rules is not so easily reached. Centennial draws from a sprawling, culturally diverse urban community. It developed a reputation for violent and disruptive behaviour among students in the 1970s. The school regained its reputation in the community, however, and was nominated for this study because it resolved these problems. Successive principals have emphasized order and respect for clear rule, while trying to engage students in learning. Vandalism is down and order has been restored.

At Centennial, the rules are clear. Hard work, accepting the legitimate authority of the school, and keeping the peace are seen as requisite for learning. The principal patrols the lunch room each noon hour. Video cameras are mounted in the hallways to keep track of students' behaviour. Elaborate written discipline codes are reiterated by the principal and teachers, and extend from not loitering in the halls to dressing appropriately. The newsletter to parents states:

> *Girls: dresses, skirts, and shorts more than 8 cm/3 inches above the knees are not acceptable dress for school; nor are tank tops, see-through, off-the-shoulder, strapless, or low-cut neckline tops allowed.*
> *Boys: shorts more than 8c m/3 inches above the knee, or tank tops are not worn in school.*
> *Outdoor clothing including hats, caps, scarves, hoods, or bandanas are not to be worn during the school day, including lunch time.*

Centennial's emphasis on rules is underpinned by the encouragement of positive social behaviour: peer mediation, intercultural understanding, and extracurricular activities. However, the emphasis on rules is strong, and parents are supportive of this approach, seeing it as necessary and appropriate for learning. Students are divided in their views, but clear on the priority the school puts on the rules.

> *Just think how this school would be without those rules. ...people would be skateboarding in the halls. And...people would be smoking everywhere....And if nothing happened when you skipped, people would be skipping all the time.* (Student, Centennial)

> Student: *Well, you can't do anything...you have to go to classes....They put cameras up, they have police officers in the school. It's like a prison.*

> Researcher: *If you were to give advice to a new student, who would be attending Centennial, what would you tell her?*
> Student: *You've got to know how to follow rules.*

> Researcher: *What does the school think is most important for students?*
> Student: *Discipline.*

The metaphor of schools as jails is reiterated by some Peguis students and teachers. The researcher reported: "Much of the discussion in one staff meeting centred on the oppressive nature of the rules. In the heat of discussion, a staff member compared his role to that of a prison guard."

At Jeanne-Mance the social goals of the school are articulated in terms of personal identity and order. The social codes and aspirations of the school reflect its history and its large population of allophone students (students whose first language is neither French nor English). Jeanne-Mance tries to give priority to learning in French and to developing a sense of belonging among the students. In a school where there are many immigrants, the sense of belonging in a new language and culture is hard to achieve and becomes an important and explicit goal. Teachers say that success is related to students' growth, their feeling of satisfaction, and achieving the goals set by the school. In this Catholic school, a parent said, "the teachers try to inculcate moral values...to try to make good citizens of the students."

The signs of control are clear in the school. Student lockers are enclosed behind a padlocked, chain-link fence to prevent student access during school hours. The outside school doors are locked during school hours. No one is allowed in the halls during classes. Surveillance of the lunchroom is carried out by specially hired assistants. The graffiti that appear are erased every two weeks by the "graffiti squad."

This emphasis on control is balanced by an attempt to encourage and teach positive behaviour, especially through school life. The extracurricular program is considered particularly important by the teachers because of its emphasis on social learning, participation and belonging. At Jeanne-Mance, "What one tries to implant...is student satisfaction and that the student can say 'I'm happy in my school, I participate in school life'." A parent says that all the outside influences — theatre, newspapers, radio — should be "stimulants that push youth to go to school...and the school climate is as important. But if one can meld the two, that's a good approach."

Teaching, rather than just enforcing positive social behaviour, is a challenge:

> *I think there's an underestimation of how valuable it is to work in the affective domain. We have...scores of kids here who cannot come to the learning table because they cannot deal*

> *with the daily rigours of life. They're not ready to learn because they cannot learn. They have not overcome their anger sufficiently well that they can even sit in those classrooms and see how what we're doing is even remotely relevant to what they're doing. And until we deal with that affective domain, those kids aren't going to do well. But I think there's an underestimation in the general public of (a) how important that is and (b) how tough it is.* (Former principal, Georges Vanier)

Extracurricular programs play an important role in student development. At Népisiguit, "student success begins with his or her integration into school life." At Balfour, one teacher says, "Personally, I feel that extracurriculars are what drive a school and keep the spirit up and make it a great or not-so-great school to attend." At Grandy's River, members of school sports teams sign a contract in which they agree to maintain their grades and follow school rules. Coaches can suspend anyone who breaks the contract. At Sydney, extracurricular activities are designed to "add character and give a quality to students' lives" that would not otherwise be offered. They "develop sportsmanship and healthy competition among students, facilitate communication and allow students to achieve in areas other than academics." One teacher described the extracurricular program as a place to build a résumé:

> *Students can find an area or a niche for themselves to study in, whether it's scholastic or an athletic endeavour or theatrical. They can get involved in student council, or the key club and other organizations that allow them to work in the community. There're all kinds of different possibilities for students here. Many students who look into the future see an opportunity to build a résumé through volunteer activity and associations.* (Teacher, Sydney)

Collective agreements determine how extracurricular activities are carried out in public schools. The extracurricular or co-curricular program is often carried out on volunteer teacher time, and volunteer student time, despite its oft-stated centrality to student success. At schools like Les Etchemins and Jeanne-Mance, it is co-ordinated by a paid professional staff person, although, even in these schools, there are comments about how difficult it is to get enough volunteer time from teachers to keep the program vital.

Schools that define themselves as "alternatives" to the mainstream pay particular attention to the culture and expectations they set for student behaviour. At St. Benedict, it is the Catholicism of the school that informs its expectations. At Joe Duquette, a Saskatoon alternative school for Aboriginal students, the code of ethics emphasizes respect based on Native traditions.

> *Respect means "to feel or show honour or esteem for someone or something; to consider the well-being of, or to treat someone or something with deference or courtesy." Showing respect is a basic law of life.*
>
> *Treat the earth and all of her aspects as your mother. Show deep respect for the mineral world, the plant world, and the animal world. Do nothing to pollute the air or the soil. If others want to destroy our mother, rise up with wisdom to defend her.*
>
> *Show deep respect for the beliefs and religions of others.*
>
> *Listen with your heart.* (Excerpts, code of ethics, Joe Duquette)

Success at Joe Duquette means developing a sense of one's identity as a Native person and respecting Native traditions. It is a question of survival, of keeping alive a way of life, and of keeping students alive and learning. Social expectations are taught through ritual, an emphasis on listening in class, and modelling by teachers, and they are enforced through rules.

Contact also emphasizes personal freedoms to a much greater extent than in a traditional high school. Contact is a place that encourages tolerance. The ideals of the school take the form of a code against racist, homophobic, or sexist remarks, for which the punishment can be expulsion.

Social expectations for students are central to the ways these schools define success. They are linked to ideals as basic as keeping students safe, as central as creating a learning environment, and as important in the long run as developing good citizenship skills. They sometimes demand only the minimum — that students obey rules — but they are based in fundamental moral positions about how people should live with one another. Sometimes these positions are articulated casually; other times the weight of the whole school is behind them.

In some ways, expectations are similar across the schools, although they may be phrased in different language. Obeying and conforming at a minimal level are required, reflecting the authority of adults over adolescents. Although civility in public is required, the particular behaviours that are unacceptable vary. Sliding down a banister or wearing a cap is not allowed at some schools, but it is at others. Schools differ in how they encourage good behaviour and how they deal with those who do not conform to the rules. In some schools, there is heavy emphasis on rules and regulations, on the hierarchies of age and power, on always being in the classroom paying attention. Students experience this emphasis as coercive and alienating, but as necessary for achieving the schools' broad social mandate. In other schools, rules are relaxed or even unspoken, although this does not make them less demanding, for students who do not respect them can be suspended. In alternative schools, there is a conscious attempt to develop other social codes, reflecting the backgrounds and assumptions of students and teachers. Both the form and the content of the rules in every school are negotiated with students and parents, in an attempt to define expectations that are acceptable and productive.

Achievement: Grades and Credits

Student success in school is most obviously linked to passing courses and getting good marks. Passing courses is what it takes to graduate. A report card records marks in each course. There is usually an honour roll for those with the highest marks. Many of the schools in this study are judged as successful because of the attention they pay to ensuring students pass their exams and learn their school subjects.

At Appalaches, a small, rural, conservative, and homogeneous school in Quebec, the rationale for including the school in the study, the sign of its success, was that students score well on province-wide exams. The exams are the challenge.

> *I like to prepare my students as if they were going into the ring to face a champion boxer. The exam is the champion and they*

> *have to get ready to challenge the champion. I don't care for easy little questions.* (Teacher, Appalaches)

Researchers found that extraordinary attention is given to ensuring that students are doing their work, getting good grades, and preparing for final exams. The school rallies around, encouraging, giving special help, getting in touch with parents, hiring people to encourage and monitor performance. Students work to get good marks.

> *During the slack period, I don't study much — only a half hour each evening. But during exams I can spend two to three hours; and, when exams roll around, weekends are for studying.* (Student, Appalaches)

The aim is always higher marks, but expectations are tailored to particular students.

> *In the case of a student who gets 65 per cent we look at the group average. If he's near the average, I encourage him to do better. But if the group average is 80 per cent and his is 65 per cent, I think it's better to leave his goal as 65 per cent rather than discourage him by aiming too high.* (Teacher, Appalaches)

Parents share the concern of the school to "develop self-confidence, not crush it." They want their children to do well, but also to be happy and satisfied with their performance, whatever its level. In 1986, the Quebec Ministry of Education raised the pass mark in all subjects from 50 to 60 per cent, a clear directive designed to raise standards of achievement across the system. It resulted in an increased level of school-leaving.

New Norway in Alberta is also a small, rural, conservative school where grades are a major preoccupation. The school takes a particular interest in students who are struggling with their academic work and has developed a special program to meet their needs. The encouraging approach that informs this program pervades the whole school. Elaborate systems are put in place to catch students who are performing poorly, who are in danger of failing. The researchers found that "students who achieve their academic grades are celebrated. When students don't earn 50 per cent on an assignment or unit, they go to supervised spares and work to regain their average. This program works well even if spending time in spares is not a favourite activity. Teachers work one-on-one with students to help them meet their goals, and when a student meets the challenge, the good news is shared." The principal — and the distance education course co-ordinator — pay close personal attention to students' marks, and their concern also acts as a motivator.

> *It's an overall philosophy in the school that we're going to take whoever we can and make success stories out of them. We'll take them as far as we're able to go, and once we see that we can't take them any further, then we'll try a bit harder.... They really do go the extra mile at New Norway to practice what they preach.* (Special education co-ordinator, New Norway)

Better marks and more effort mean more opportunities in the larger world. At New Norway, good marks, hard work, and a positive approach are what count as success. Since not all students can be expected to get first-class marks, teachers assess capabilities and encourage all students to do their best.

Grandy's River was also nominated in part because of its students' academic achievements. Despite low scores on the 1989 Canadi Test of Basic Skills (20th percentile in vocabulary, 32nd in reading, 37th in language), in 1993, of those students graduating from Grandy's River, 15 per cent did so with distinction, seven per cent with honours. On provincial examinations, average marks in advanced math, business math and academic math were all higher at Grandy's River than the district and provincial averages.

Teachers in Newfoundland must submit mark estimates for their students before students take the province-wide exams, known as "the publics." The Department of Education and Training compares the teachers' estimates with student results and applies a formula to see if the school-based mark is substantially different from the exam mark. In this way, the differential marking schemes of different schools is overcome. One teacher saw success in the fact that her students' marks were raised through this process:

> *In the past several years, my marks have been jacked up. If I send my students in with a 60, per cent, they end up giving them a 67 per cent or something like that. They've been jacked*

> *up every year by six and eight per cent* (Teacher, Grandy's River)

At Grandy's River, academic expectations vary with the student. The researchers discovered that "for one group of students and their families, expectations are very high. They are university-bound, they worry about their preparation, they want challenging courses. For other students and their families, simply to pass is sufficient. For these parents the goal is that their child stay in school and graduate, regardless of courses selected or program followed."

At the large urban schools, expectations for high marks also frame definitions of success. At Centennial, expectations for academic performance go along with the emphasis on discipline described earlier. When the province raised the passing mark from 50 to 60 per cent, the new principal made teachers and students more accountable and strengthened remedial support for students. As a result, the school has more students attaining over 80 per cent.

Centennial makes a point, however, of not holding up grades as the be-all and end-all. Teachers, students, parents, administrators, and other community members consistently report that a "well-rounded" student is what they want, not a student who gets all A's. Academic effort is as important as, or more important than, achievement. Students from the gifted program, for example, are quick to note that it is not your mark but your effort that counts. Teachers and members of the administration state that the school's academic philosophy is based on striving for success. Members of the community also note that Centennial is successful because its students work to the best of their ability.

At Georges Vanier, the credit system has become the currency of academic exchange. Students need a certain number of credits to graduate, and teachers have some latitude about what to include in these packages and how to grade them. The temptation is to give students credit simply if they put in the effort and attend class. Recognizing that this is a problem, the school board is emphasizing higher standards of achievement. The school has a variety of mechanisms for helping students achieve, including extra study days before exams and extra help sessions in the morning or at lunch time. Special remediation classes have been considered for students experiencing difficulties, but they can be expensive to operate.

When the principal looked over grades reported by teachers and said that a class average of 48 per cent was not a satisfactory result, he asked how teachers could help students be more successful. His remarks were interpreted by some teachers as encouragement to pass more students, whatever their level of achievement, and they irritated other teachers who pride themselves on not inflating grades, not passing students simply for effort.

> *If you look at our marks, we in the English department fail a disproportionate number of students. That's because of our commitment to high standards. But we don't get congratulations for doing so. It's a double bind.* (Teacher, Georges Vanier)

The challenge for schools is to find a balance that draws the best from students without making them feel like failures when they do not do well on tests. At Hartland:

> *I think we do produce good people. If we have some doctors and lawyers and whatever, that is wonderful. But if we don't, as long as we have good working people who want something more out of life than welfare and unemployment, then I'm happy.* (Teacher, Hartland)

Good grades open doors for students, at least to further education. They are the most obvious indicators that students are succeeding and teachers are teaching well. Grades are offered on a single scale from 1 to 100 or A to F, and students compete for higher marks. Poor grades close doors for students. Many students struggle, and teachers do not judge all students equally able to learn. Teachers are confronted daily with the reality that students are hurt by low grades, and that students must see a possibility for success if they are to stay engaged and motivated. A single scale for valuing students' work seems inadequate. Expectations must be different for different students. Although marks are given for knowing the answers, reading critically, writing analytically, and solving quadratic equations, they are also given for effort and for social and moral commitment, especially for those students who are seen as less competent.

There is unease in schools about grades based only on academic performance. Students are urged to work not just for grades but for learning and enjoyment. Deciding on grades, especially for students at risk, raises the question of what counts as success. In the larger context of the social purpose of schooling, grades can be a problem as well as a fundamental measure of success.

Success as Social and Academic Achievement

> *Educating students goes beyond the classroom; it's more than simply an intellectual activity. Total development of young people is as much concerned with their inner selves as with their intellect.* (Pastoral services facilitator, Jeanne-Mance)

> *To turn out productive members of society, the school has to move beyond academics to a focus on respect and responsibility and communication skills.* (Teacher, Hartland)

> *The main goal of the school is to prepare students for the real world....for what comes after they get out of school. It should be teaching them thinking skills.* (Employer)

> *I think success, in a large measure, is anything that contributes to a child's growth, whether it be purely academic or exposing them to other aspects of life, from sports to social studies to different cultural activities — whatever it may be.....[These things] help kids develop the very skills they're going to need to learn.* (Teacher, Centennial)

As these quotes and the preceding discussion make clear, success as defined in these schools is multifaceted. Achievement can be intellectual, moral, vocational, and social. It involves effort, engagement, and identification with a community larger than oneself. These are all interrelated parts of the process of educating the young to live productively and happily. The relationships between the various facets of success are complex, and schools struggle with them. Although some members of society argue that schools must narrow their goals and focus on the academic, others argue that the connections between various goals can be made more harmonious.

In most situations, the various aspects of growing up and learning go together and reinforce one another. Attending class regularly and on time leads to learning, as do obeying the rules and behaving well. Learning encourages good behaviour. The good student works hard, attends classes, and gets good grades. Alternative schools often criticize the prevailing social norms in secondary education, and provide their own moral and social strictures for students, albeit ones that recognize more latitude in dress, language, and behaviour. The intimate connections between the social and the academic are articulated at Contact. There, teachers and streetworkers believe it is difficult for students to build on their academic success by finding stable employment or going on for further study if they do not have the self-esteem and the strategies necessary to help change the impoverished and problematic world in which they live. These schools teach their students what interests them and provide credits for a wide range of activities that are considered educational within the context of their lives.

Sometimes, however, the various aspects of success exist in an uneasy tension. Does a school's emphasis on order and obedience come at the expense of independence, creativity, and critical thinking? Do the codes of social behaviour inhibit intellectual excellence? Should resources spent on discipline be allocated to instruction? Does the time taken to discuss career planning or racism detract from time spent on mathematics or history?

At large and complex schools in particular, debates are taking place about the importance of traditional academic standards in the face of social and economic change. Georges Vanier has added many programs and services that allow it to meet a variety of student needs. This diversity of approaches has allowed, perhaps encouraged, teachers to define success in a diversity of ways.

The immediate social needs of students are pressing. Teachers want to encourage them and give them confidence in themselves. They want to make Vanier a pleasant and orderly place to be. They want to give all students a chance, not just those who easily accept the traditional standards and priorities of schooling. Only in this way will students stay in school and do the work required.

> *Success is partly academic achievement, but that's only part. It's more than learning accounting or history, it's learning to work with people....I guess I would define a successful school, —and this may sound strange—as one where you don't have a visit by your police force every other day and you don't have*

> *to break up a fight, and you can go through three or four months without being sworn at. Somewhere along the line you feel that something you have done has got through.* (Teacher, Georges Vanier).

Those who hold to a more traditional academic focus feel such an attitude means standards have been lowered. The old unanimity about the importance of grades is gone. No new consensus has emerged about how to tackle the affective and the intellectual. Opinion varies from teacher to teacher, from student to student.

At Les Etchemins, the debate is more likely to emerge between the teachers, whose concern remains academic, and the professional whose concern is the extracurricular program. Les Etchemins' student life program has a complex relationship with the regular academic curriculum. Officially, it has always been defined as supplementary, but it sometimes takes primacy in the lives and minds of students. It involves paid staff and a substantial budget: 17 staff members are non-teaching professionals. Some students and teachers see the social activities as a way to overcome the boredom of classes and the lack of engagement some students exhibit in their academic subjects. Others think it overwhelms the focus on courses. The principal and the director of the student life program work carefully to keep the primacy of the academic courses in view, while recognizing the centrality of student life activities to the health of the student community. Students comment:

> *When you get home in the evening, you study because you know full well that if your overall average drops, if you don't pass certain subjects, your responsibilities will be cut.*
>
> *It's important for Sylvain and Gérard to monitor things, because at some point you get so caught up in the whirlwind of activities that you forget about your studies.*
>
> *You come to school to study and learn... The problem with this school is that student life is so full and rich that the academic side is sometimes a little bit neglected.*

The schools in this study focus on both the academic and social aspects of education. To focus on the academic alone would assume some agreement on the social norms that make academic knowledge important. It would assume that students agree on the value and meaning of school assignments and that they come to the classroom happy, motivated, and fed. For many young people, this cannot be assumed. But even in academic classrooms with well-motivated students, teachers want more than good answers from students. They want responsibility, effort, and a balance of independence and concern for others. One challenge all these schools confront is how to extend course content and grading to include the wide set of concerns that confront students and, ultimately, all Canadians in a rapidly changing world. They are looking for a more creative synergy between the academic and the social, new ways to get the two to work together, not just at the level of basic conformity but at a higher level where students tackle complex issues about their own behaviour and responsibilities as citizens.

Concluding Comments: The Value of Secondary Schooling

For schools, the value of their credentials is both a challenge and a resource. It is a challenge because schools must teach what is valued by a diverse public, ensure this is done effectively for every student, and assess with grades and, eventually, certificates what each student has learned. It is a resource because it will lead people to support schools, encourage their children to learn, and participate in improving schools.

A high school diploma is valuable currency across the country, increasingly sought after by young people and their parents, whatever kind of community they live in. There are important similarities among secondary schools, no matter where they are located. Following rules, getting to class on time, getting good grades, and passing the tests are universal expectations. But a high school diploma also represents different experiences in different communities. The definition of a good student varies from school to school, reflecting the moral and social expectations of parents, teachers, and the broader community.

How much difference and how much similarity are appropriate are questions for public policy, for all of us. Schools are local institutions, central to families and to each community's sense of its identity, run by locally elected school boards. But while recognizing the importance of local definitions of success, the country also needs confidence in the judgements of schools to maintain the value of diplomas and credentials. Without this confidence, resources will be withdrawn from schools, other institutions will increasingly be used to transmit "really useful knowledge," and other criteria will increasingly be used to choose people for jobs and confer social status. The less well-off will suffer, because they may not be able to obtain access to private alternatives. Public secondary schooling now offers all young people a chance to learn, whatever their background. If schools remain responsive to their communities, while also keeping the value of their diplomas high, they may be able to prevent the privatization of education and ensure that opportunities remain available to all young people.

Any approach to school policy must recognize that the social and the academic aspects are tightly intertwined. To ignore the moral and social parts of schooling and to call for a stronger focus on knowledge, test scores, and provincial examination results is to disregard the consensus that emerges from the schools in this study: that students need to learn a lot more than traditional academics. School credentials have meaning in the workplace and in society because they are seen to reflect both social and intellectual competencies. Employers say they look for more than high test scores, and many teachers see academic courses as having limited uses beyond preparing students for university. One could conclude that the intellectual life is not greatly important to most Canadians, or that the academic as defined by the universities is no longer seen as a universal goal. Or one could conclude that our notions of the academic deserve to be broadened.

Chapter 5

How Curriculum Is Defined: Power and Knowledge

THE PRESCRIBED COURSE OF STUDIES in a secondary school details what kind of knowledge students are to learn, in what areas. Grades are based on how well students master this content. Determining the formal curriculum requires decisions about the kind of knowledge, skills, and values necessary for young people, because only a limited range of things can be taught in school. It also requires decisions about how this knowledge is to be distributed because different students take different courses.

Curriculum directions are set by the province or territory, and school boards and schools have varying amounts of latitude to interpret them. Tomkins (1986) found that the curriculum in Canadian schools has evolved towards some important commonalities, although it started from quite different traditions among missionaries, Native peoples, and academies of various kinds. The most commonly required secondary school subjects are first and second languages, mathematics, science, and social studies. These "academic" subjects are most often compulsory: the ones that students need to graduate and the ones that are required by universities and usually by colleges as well. They are the only subjects reported in *Secondary Education in Canada: A Student Transfer Guide* (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, 1991), an indication of what "really counts" if a student is moving from one province to another. They are the subjects in which provincial examinations are most often given and the focus of concern for national testing. They are the subjects that have power and centrality in the curriculum.

In Canadian schools, ideals of equal opportunity co-exist with beliefs about differences in the interests, needs, and capacities of students. Education can provide an opportunity for economic mobility but it must also recognize the different capacities and interests of students and fit them for different positions in the social and economic structure of the country. Core academic subjects seem to offer the best opportunity for upward mobility. Performing well in these courses opens the door to further education and is the basis of the stratification of students by the secondary school.

A common finding in educational research is the correlation between the social class and cultural background of students and their achievement in school (although the relationship is far from perfect). Students who do less well can be placed in less challenging and less academic courses. The "streamed" system that results is not always obvious to an outsider, but students and teachers are well aware of which courses are high-status. Less streaming and a more inclusive curriculum are attempts to offer more students a chance to do well, but diversifying the curriculum tends to add subjects with lower status than the academic core and to marginalize those students who are not taking the academic core. Courses that are not linked to post-secondary requirements do not have the currency of traditional academic courses.

This chapter explores how the curriculum is organized in the 21 schools of our study, focusing on the dilemma of providing equal opportunity to learn in a diverse society where students have different interests, background knowledge, learning styles, hopes, and fears, but where a fairly narrow range of academic subjects have power and status. The chapter starts with the relationship between the core academic subjects and the smorgasbord of courses and programs that has developed in some of these secondary schools. It then moves to consider issues related to what kind of knowledge counts.

Core and Periphery in the Curriculum

> *Kildonan East has classes to suit everyone.* (Student, Kildonan)

> *If they go through our school in grades 10, 11, or 12, they have to meet the standard of the academic program.... We don't have a big mix in our high school. I think that's an advantage.* (Teacher, Hartland)

Many argue that a common core of knowledge should be taught to all students. The Economic Council of Canada (1992) concluded, "Curriculum planning should centre on high expectations and clear goals in a limited number of key subjects, with very few electives." The Carnegie report on high schools (Boyer, 1983) concluded that a common core of learning was necessary in U.S. high schools. Bryk, Lee and Holland (1993) also concluded that a "delimited technical core" of academic courses is integral to the success of Catholic schools in the U.S. Others, however, argue in favour of a diverse curriculum that meets the needs of different groups of student.

Over time, a wide array of courses has been made available to secondary school students in an attempt to connect learning to their experience and future plans. In many jurisdictions, courses are streamed, with the "academic" level considered the highest. A wide array of courses is now accepted for high school graduation, although universities still require academic courses through the final year of high school. Schools face the dilemma of dealing with a diversity of student needs in a world where levels of knowledge are accepted as stratified. Since the core academic subjects are the high-status courses that open the door to university, diversifying the curriculum is often seen as a lowering of standards. Even academic courses are stratified.

In this study, some schools concentrate on the key academic courses, while others offer a wider choice. All debate the advantages of broadening course offerings versus the fear about what this does to "standards." Each school offers a response particular to its context, and tries to balance the need for equity and common learning with the need to recognize differences among students.

The smaller mainstream schools in this study focus almost entirely on the core academic subjects. These schools offer fewer courses, concentrating on provincial requirements and those courses necessary for university entrance, to ensure students have a chance to continue their schooling if they wish. Language, math, social studies, and science are key.

Grandy's River is a small (240 students) rural school that offers 47 courses (90 to 100 courses are offered in larger schools in Newfoundland). There are no music or art programs, no family studies, and a restricted range of academic options. Courses are offered at "basic," "academic," and "advanced" levels. Students with special needs are integrated into regular classrooms. At Grandy's River, the curriculum is restricted by resources, not philosophy. The school would like to offer more, but the timetable must accommodate the constraints of only 15 teachers and a restricted number of classrooms.

The school has made extraordinary efforts to expand the physical facilities to accommodate new course offerings, creating a workshop behind the gym stage for three courses in industrial arts/ technology education. This workshop can only be reached by going through a classroom on the second floor. The school also opened a weight-lifting room above the gym, which students reach by climbing a precarious ladder.

The timetable is a series of compromises within the provincial framework. Although the province considers physical education optional, it is a compulsory subject for all students at the school. All grade 11 students take global issues instead of history, because timetabling two grade 11 social studies courses would strain resources and because the principal is committed to environmental and global awareness. Senior-level biology and world geography are available every other year. Students are also encouraged to take environmental science. When staff resources were cut back, chemistry was dropped from the timetable. When a science teacher heard that the loss of one teacher in the following school year could mean the cancellation of the school's only chemistry course, he immediately volunteered to give up his only preparation period in order to offer it. The English teacher also added lunchtime enrichment courses in literature for university-bound students.

Grandy's River, however, considers it important to offer core courses at different levels of difficulty. The school offers nine math courses (including advanced, academic, consumer and vocational) and six language courses (including basic, vocational, and academic) to accommodate different levels of student achievement in key academic subjects. Advanced and academic are sometimes taught by the same teacher using adjacent rooms. Although some teachers express concern about this approach, the mathematics teacher notes that it can be an advantage, as students learn to work independently. Grandy's River, then, has a streamed academic core, where the range of both technical and academic electives is constrained by lack of resources.

New Norway, a small rural school in Alberta, is subject to many of the same constraints as Grandy's River. The provincial guidelines allow for streamed academic courses. The school uses distance education to extend the options available to students.

Distance education is supported by the Alberta government and is used routinely in rural schools. The courses are pre-packaged curriculum units, some involving video or computer disks, which students pick up from a classroom in the school, work on independently, and then have discussed and marked by a teacher in the district. Assignments are returned to the school and then a new unit is started. Students at New Norway were registered in 80 different distance education courses. Five teachers at the school marked distance education courses in business, biology, mechanics, career and life management, social studies, chemistry, mathematics, and occupations. Distance education offers students courses that are not taught in the school and allows them to work on their own on courses that would otherwise not fit into their timetables. Some students took these courses because they preferred to study on their own, while others took courses, the researchers said, "that were known to be 'easy' because they just needed a few credits."

Distance education addresses the need to offer a variety of courses within a limited timetable and limited teacher time. New Norway was the only school in our study that had a well-developed distance education program, although Langley has decided to use this system next year to expand its academic offerings, and Balfour uses it for its teen mothers program. Almost every province has a provincially operated distance education program.

Hartland, a small rural anglophone school in New Brunswick with 400 students, also offers a restricted core curriculum. It offers only 33 courses whereas the course of studies for New Brunswick lists over 130. Here, the restricted range is a result of the school's history and choice as much as its size and resources. Only college preparation courses are offered at Hartland; no vocational, industrial, commercial, or fine arts courses are available and there is a limited selection of electives.

Students who do well in the core academic subjects stay in the school after grade 10, while students who cannot "cut it" or want a more comprehensive program are transferred to a nearby school. This restricted focus on core academic subjects is a source of both pride and debate around the school. As a district administrator says, "[The core subjects] served the elite of the Hartland area well. They always have and they still do." They are also more likely to serve girls, who stay for grades 11 and 12, than boys, who are more likely to leave for a different kind of program.

The academic core has been expanded at the grade 8 and 9 levels by the addition of the Paideia program, based on the integrated, "great books" philosophy of Mortimer Adler (1984). Three teachers run seminars that focus on problem-solving and critical thinking, trying to encourage students to be more open-minded and analytical. Students sit in a circle and debate art, history, music, literature, politics, or social issues. They read prepared material prior to class and the teacher acts more as a coach than a transmitter of knowledge. The school offers advanced placement courses at the senior levels. At the grade 12 level, it offers two math courses (120 and 122), one English course, three social studies courses (history, world problems, and economics), French, two science courses (physics and biology) and co-op education. At the grade 11 level, courses in keyboarding, computer education, data processing, and entrepreneurship are included.

New Brunswick has a commitment to inclusive education, but although the district to which Hartland belongs has been a leader in this area, Hartland itself has been slower to meet the challenge. Even a limited broadening of the curriculum raises concern:

> *We've tried to stay academic, but...they've watered down all the courses now. ...We're academic, but there's an awful lot of easy courses here the kids can take — useless [for]... going on to higher training. They are great for the kids and interesting for them and probably somewhere there's some use for them; I don't know, I guess the course must be useful or it wouldn't be there.* (Teacher, Hartland)

Some of the new courses are not subject to province-wide examinations and are not required, or even recognized in some cases, for university entrance. Teachers and parents ask what the "standards" are, if such courses are just for "fun," just "extras" that don't really "count."

The researchers concluded that Hartland is confronting an interesting challenge as it questions its definition of success and redefines the mission and purpose of the school in changing times. The school is caught in a tug-of-war of values: maintaining high standards while being more inclusive is a dilemma for both the staff and the community. Living up to the school motto — "Everyone learns, because everyone is important" — is a goal and a challenge for teachers at Hartland.

Népisiguit, which serves a diverse francophone clientele in Bathurst, New Brunswick, offers a broader curriculum and clear streaming. In grade 10, eight courses are required. All the academic courses are offered at two and sometimes three levels of difficulty (regular, modified, applied). The two options, technology and physical education, are not streamed. By grade 12, only French is required and a wide variety of options is available, including advanced mathematics, co-operative education, values education, computing, and industrial design. The school has also begun a program for gifted and talented students, called Challenge for Excellence, which involves more interdisciplinary and concrete experiences for students. This program has undergone a great deal of consultation and evaluation by the school.

The researchers report that, in 1991, the school began to gather information to develop a program directed at gifted and talented students. A committee, which included the principal as chair, the vice-principals for pedagogy and student services, and five teachers, was set up. The committee visited various secondary schools, particularly in Quebec, and attended conventions on giftedness. They read, researched, and reflected, and then developed and tested the Challenge for Excellence program. The program is directed at students whose learning capabilities are above average and who have a keen sense of curiosity; students who strive for excellence, those who always want to learn more, delve deeper, and develop their creativity and imagination. The program is also directed to those who want to concentrate intensively on a sport.

Students were admitted to this program on the basis of their achievements and attitude, measured in tests and interviews. Three groups of grade 10 students started in the program in 1993. It was evaluated by students and parents and modified to include additional activities such as budget planning, preparing a science exhibition, using Internet, and visiting various industries.

Sydney Academy has a neighbouring school that will take students (in this case only female students) who want a less academic curriculum. It also, however, offers distinct programs within its own walls to meet the needs of different kinds of students. The more challenging academic programs are for the more successful students; alternative programs have been developed to keep less successful students in school.

> *The variety of programs offered here makes a difference to the success. Failure for students is often the result of having a curriculum they cannot handle. The retention rate here has to be because of the flexible programs.* (Vice-principal, Sydney)

> *The general program...is a program for those kids who are not interested in going on to university, but who want to finish high school and who take high-school-leaving...courses to prepare themselves for some spot in the work force. We think that's a valid program and we're thinking of trying to combine that general program and the careers program...so we can offer that special option to more kids.* (Vice-principal, Sydney)

The school emphasizes academic courses. Seventy-five per cent of Sydney Academy students are in university preparation courses. The school prides itself on its enriched academic programs like French immersion and the International Baccalaureate, which have historically attracted the "best" students from across Cape Breton. The school recently lost its French immersion program to another school, but has kept an enriched French program. The principal worries that recent Nova Scotia Department of Education and Culture inclusivity initiatives will threaten the International Baccalaureate (IB) program.

> *If you look at the proposals that are being made by the province of Nova Scotia now, they're saying that all enrichment should be done within the confines of the...regular program. With a program like the IB program, that just doesn't work because enrichment is not something that's done for 25 minutes or 15 minutes one day and a half-an-hour the next day. The whole concept is enrichment. It is a program that is several* levels *beyond what we often refer to as "university preparatory" in a regular academic program.* (Principal, Sydney)

A one-stream approach would require significant changes in programs at Sydney.

Although Quebec scondary schools were first developed to be "polyvalent," most offer only an academic program. Quebec offers two kinds of secondary diplomas; a secondary school diploma and a secondary school vocational diploma. Only the secondary school diploma, which involves academic courses, is offered at the schools the researchers studied.

The curriculum for the secondary school diploma is outlined by the province. Students must take French, English, math, physical education, and religious and moral education in each year of secondary school. They take history or geography in the first four years and economics in the final year. They must take physical or biological sciences every year except the final year. Art is required in the first two years, as is some guidance. Options are few. In secondary 4 (grade 10), four of 36 credits are optional. In secondary 5 (grade 11), 12 of 36 are optional. The lack of options and the detailed outline of the curriculum mean that there is little discussion of curriculum content in Quebec schools.

Requirements for entrance to college programs further restrict choice, especially in senior-year chemistry, physics, and biology. Students who want to pursue science at a collège d'enseignement général et professionnel (cégep) need advanced math and physics courses. These requirements lead some students to comment that math, French, English, and physical sciences are the most important "because there's no choice; they are compulsory and we must pass." Beyond that, the teacher makes the difference as to which subjects students choose.

A school like Les Etchemins with over 2,000 students can offer options. It offers enriched math, five optional French courses, and extra courses in the arts. It also offers hairdressing, electronics, typing, and an introduction to commerce. "With 2,200 students, one can do what ever one wants, there is always someone to choose the options," the principal explains. The range is a particular point of pride.

> *There's no private school that can compete with a school like ours in ...the variety of things students can do — student life, all the possible activities, the funding available for all kinds of things. In French, for example, the options include journalism, the novel, poetry, story-telling, theatre. We have dramatic*

> *arts; music — we're very strong in that field; fine arts — another strength. We have science study groups and physical education study groups. Where else can a student find so much to choose from? Certainly not everywhere — not in private schools.* (Teacher, Les Etchemins)

Quebec uses streaming less than other provinces. It offers advanced-level courses in science and math and optional courses that enrich the academic program, but the overall philosophy is that all students should pass the same exam, although they will take different amounts of time to do so. Students who progress quickly can take an extra subject or do supplementary work, and there are several remedial programs outlined by the province. Two are offered by Jeanne-Mance and Les Etchemins: an "individualized learning path" program for students more than two years behind, and a "life skills and work skills education" program for those who are even further behind and in danger of failing out of school altogether. Appalaches does not offer either of these programs. The life skills and work skills program teaches a wide range of skills and encourages students to take responsibility. As one student says: "You learn to get by, to cook, make pies, budget for the week. That's better that roaming the streets. "

Another remedial program that attempts to create a special climate and a feeling of belonging takes place in a more attractive space, with plants and comfortable couches; it is as if they were "training in the workplace," but the basic curriculum is the same as the one taught to the rest of the students. After one year in the program, students are expected to return to the mainstream.

At Appalaches, the extra support consists of remedial teaching. The teacher identifies and puts students on a temporary individualized learning path to ease them into regular programs. And in several subjects, students can take a remedial course in which the number of teaching periods is increased in secondary 4 (grade 10). Students who are judged unable to undertake the regular secondary program are sent to other schools in the district. About 25 of 570 students are in this category.

The talented and gifted program at Centennial is a point of pride for staff at this Quebec school. The program, described as a school-within-a-school, provides students with the opportunity to excel academically and contribute to the community as well. Selected students enter the five-year program in grade 7. Academic work is concentrated so that most finish their required courses by the end of grade 10. The extra time can be used to take cégep-level courses, join the school band, pursue graphic arts enrichment, develop public speaking or debating skills, and so on. Students in this program also take a leadership training course in which they are encouraged to participate in programs in the school, community, or church to help people in need. The program places more importance on achieving to the best of one's ability in a co-operative, rather than competitive, atmosphere.

Large urban schools can offer a more diverse curriculum than small rural schools because they can place students in more timetable blocks with a larger group of teachers. The diversity of the student body justifies offering different kinds as well as different levels of courses. However, the academic core — language, mathematics, science, and social studies — retains its priority.

Kildonan, Georges Vanier, and Vancouver Technical are large English-language high schools where a wide variety of options are offered to students. Kildonan was nominated for participation in this study because it offers exceptional program choice for students. It offers four educational "strands" leading to grade 12 graduation diplomas: vocational/technical, administration and computer studies, honours dual diploma, and academic. There are also opportunities for advanced placement programs. Kildonan also offers programs for many special-needs students. There is a life skills program for physically and mentally challenged adolescents and a "positive learning under supervision" program for at-risk students who have had trouble being successful in school.

This widely differentiated curriculum has been developed to serve diverse types of students. Again, there is a clear hierarchy of programs, led by the core academic courses. Teachers refer to the "calibre" of their students. There has been a lively debate in the school about the merits of streaming in the core subjects, which all students take. Each department decides the kind and level of streaming that is appropriate. The mathematics department offers courses at different levels, but the English and social studies departments integrate all students into their courses.

A few staff members continue to see a split between the academic and vocational departments. Others, however, see that attitude as a vestige of the days when vocational studies, for example, had little need for the study of English.

> *I see an interesting cross-section of students in the vocational programs. I used to think of vocational programs as places where the needy student could go and [not] have to worry about academics. "They can't read very well, Let's channel them into these programs. They need to learn a trade." The only thing is it is not quite that easy, because when they come out of [Kildonan], they have to have a certificate and that certificate has to stand for something in the community. It means a certain level of skills, a certain level of confidence, whether that certificate means they are going on to ...the vocational college, or whether it means they are going to work as a helper in an auto body shop....To gain that certificate isn't so easy for some we've been channelling along that stream. The manuals they have to read are extremely technical — the language, the vocabulary, the load of information.* (Teacher, Kildonan)

Vancouver Technical has diversified its program, expanding beyond its former "technical" focus to include academic subjects. Its curriculum includes programs for the gifted and a French immersion program. These programs attract and serve a clientele that might otherwise go to more academic schools. Vancouver Technical has also continued to enhance its technical programs, its alternative programs for First Nations students, and its programs for students at risk and students who want a more flexible learning environment. The diversity of programs offered is linked to a philosophy of inclusivity.

> *...We all want kids to stay in school, but I think we need to address it in different ways. Certainly, we need to have flexible timetables, to negotiate different focuses for programs, to have the kids off the campus site, involved in mentorships, involved in work experience....We need to be a little bit more flexible....I think parents are waiting for us to do it, to be honest, and have been waiting for quite a while. We need to get down to business and to do it instead of just talking about it.* (Teacher, Vancouver Technical)

There is no official streaming at Vancouver Technical, but in core academic courses within the regular program teachers typically receive class lists that identify students as "regular," "modified" (an estimated ten per cent of the total), and "special needs," so that they can modify instruction and grading practices. Requirements for graduation include some courses at grades 11 and 12, but they can be chosen from vocational, technical, fine arts, or a range of academic electives from physics to geography to English literature. Only grade 12 English or communications is required — both are examined provincially. Universities, however, require English and several other academic subjects at the grade 12 level. For admission to university science courses, students need to fill their timetables with academic credits. English, French, math, physics, chemistry, probably biology, and a social studies course make for a full load, and this kind of scheduling sets apart the "academic" students.

Georges Vanier follows the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training policy of offering some courses at three different levels of difficulty (basic, general, and advanced) in grades 10 through Ontario Academic Courses (OACs). It also offers a wide range of courses, from the arts to vocational courses to computer education. As one student said, Georges Vanier "accommodates everybody."

Teachers at Georges Vanier echo the concerns of teachers at Hartland. Some teachers feel that the school's increased emphasis on diversity and inclusivity has diminished support for academic courses.

> *Science teachers here don't feel the administration cares much about science. I'm not ashamed of elitism when it's based on hard work...but the philosophy coming from the board office seems to be to make things equal for all students by eliminating special academic programs.* (Two science teachers, Georges Vanier)

> *[I teach] one of the remaining academic subjects. Not like some of the non-academic things we see happening here, like conflict resolution! There are a lot of courses offered in this school for credit that are absolutely ridiculous.* (Teacher, Georges Vanier)

Others see the new curriculum initiatives as necessary.

> *A lot of people are so focused on their subject area, they don't know anything else. There is an annoying ratio of old dinosaurs*

> *at Vanier. And it's not age, it's attitude! There're a lot of people here I'd love to replace if I could wave a wand. In the guise of maintaining academic standards, they are so rigid and confrontational.* (Teacher, Georges Vanier)

Programs for students at Georges Vanier are individualized, but they must fulfil the requirements for graduation in Ontario. These are five credits in English or French as a first language; one in French or English as a second language; two each in mathematics and science; one each in Canadian history, Canadian geography, and an additional social science course; one each in arts, physical and health education, and business or technological studies; and 14 optional credits. University-bound students must complete six OAC credits.

Vanier has tried to redefine a core. Rather than require that all students take the same courses, they have defined key skills that must be learned in every course. For the past six years, various staff members have been engaged in developing this "critical skills initiative." The four critical skills identified are personal, problem-solving, communications, and applications. The five "exit outcomes" are self-directed learner, creative problem-solver, effective communicator, collaborative contributor, and quality producer. Specific learning strategies and activities have been identified for building these skills, as well as approaches to assessment and evaluation. All teachers are encouraged to relate the course material directly to the skill areas.

The researchers found, for example, that if students are assigned to work together on a specific project, the teacher will help them to see that the curricular content provides a vehicle to enhance their personal skills (by working together in a productive way); their problem-solving skills (by making concrete decisions about the direction of the project and their own responsibilities for it); their communication skills (by speaking and listening to each other and by writing a project report); and their application skills (by using desktop publishing to enhance the presentation of their report or by showing it to other students by means of one of the school's computer networks).

Implementation is not simple, for it involves rethinking the curriculum. The administration is concerned that the message be communicated clearly:

> *We have some staff members who are able and who have the skills to incorporate within the teaching strategies a number of these at one time, and others who are still struggling. We communicate it in professional development sessions, information sessions, memos, documents, talking to people, having members of the critical skills steering committee act as coaches for different people. It is part of many of our publications and in our student planner. We're trying to get at the kids more to help them to understand. On our telecommunications network we've now started a critical skills conference.* (Vice-principal, Georges Vanier)

Schools in Ontario are being pushed in this direction by the province's "common curriculum," which applies to grades 1 to 9 and which focuses on the "outcomes" achieved in the elementary and early secondary grades (*The Common Curriculum*, 1993).

At St. Benedict, the emphasis on "megaskills" of responsibility, effort, teamwork, and time management indicates the same direction. A new report card at St. Benedict assesses student progress in these skills as well as subject content. The attention to megaskills occurs "on the periphery of subject content learning," and it has the support of teachers. Students are involved in self-assessments.

Alternative schools develop curricular programs that combine academic requirements with relevance for a particular group of students. They have the mandate and the small size to redefine the core and respond to differences. They work within the same general environment as the other schools; however, where the academic core is linked to further education and where students do not measure up on the academic criteria , the students are taken to be less able.

Alternative schools take different approaches to dealing with differences among students, while trying to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to learn. Some offer more diversity than others, but all confront the issue of streaming at the same time as they confront diversity. One way to avoid streaming and keep high academic standards for all students is to offer a restricted range of academic courses. This strategy depends, however, on having a neighbouring school that will accommodate students who do not respond well to this sort of curriculum. Schools in isolated communities — like Arviat and Grandy's River — and schools that serve a broad population — like Népisiguit and Georges Vanier — see success in their flexibility and responsiveness to the different needs of students. But the high status of the academic courses is never far beneath the surface.

What is Core? Debates about Curriculum

At many of the schools in this study the content of core academic courses is taken for granted. The provincial guidelines that govern these courses are interpreted by individual teachers or departments, but math is considered to be math and history is history. The content of these courses is rarely debated in small schools, but teachers do discuss which provincial course is most important for their students. In large schools, subject department decisions tend to replace school-wide discussions of what knowledge is of most worth. Issues that are debated in the popular press and academic journals about what constitutes knowledge in subjects like English, history, or mathematics are rarely mentioned. Shakespeare is widely taught, but there is little discussion of literary theory. There is more European than Asian history. The arts curriculum includes ballet, Bach, and the Old Masters, but not Aboriginal drumming, Chinese watercolours, or Kabuki theatre. The merits of teaching grammar, adding feminist analyses, or repeating topics from year to year in mathematics are simply not at issue. The nature of scientific inquiry, the most valuable kinds of physical activity, and the relationship between biology and physics may be discussed by individuals or in particular departments, but they do not surface as issues that engage the school. The academic core tends to be taken for granted, if sometimes railed against for its rigidity.

There are a few schools, however, in which these debates occur. These schools grapple with questions of what knowledge is of most worth and for whom; who is in the best position to make these decisions; and whose heritage and knowledge should be taught. These debates — about Aboriginal knowledge, fine arts, or new vocational directions — have brought these schools to the attention of their communities, which have singled them out as worth inquiring about, worth learning from, and worth sending one's children to.

Debating curriculum energizes teachers and students and can result in the development of new curricula. There is a risk, however, that new curricula will create divisions and pose dilemmas. Although the schools debating these issues are finding no easy answers, they are asking questions about equity and differences. They are not simply adding courses on the periphery of the curriculum, but asking what kinds of knowledge should constitute the common core.

Vocational Knowledge and Experience

The attempt to have more vocational knowledge incorporated into the curriculum is long-standing. In 1914, a federal royal commission recommended that schools expand their curriculum from the core academic subjects to include more technical and vocational options and the federal government offered money to the provinces to mount vocational programs in schools. In 1992, the Economic Council of Canada concluded that "the options for the non-academic student have been neglected and... the general disrepute in which vocational programs are held is damaging." The Council noted that although there were some very good programs, they were far too few and did not reach nearly enough students.

Most schools in this study have some sort of vocational curriculum, but for the most part it remains peripheral. The range is huge: entrepreneurship at Hartland, co-op at Sydney, compulsory technology at Népisguit, an optional technology stream at Appalaches, agriculture at Pain Court, refrigeration and automotive studies at Kildonan, career preparation at Langley. Schools try in all kinds of ways to connect students with the world of work and to offer practical, applied, or vocational as well as academic education. Some schools are trying to rethink and rehabilitate their vocational programs, to make them interesting to students and relevant to employers.

School personnel believe education must be "useful," but the role of the secondary school in vocational education is not quite clear. The vocational curriculum needs to overcome its second-class status, integrate both girls and boys, and separate itself from the concept of training for particular employers. Schools struggle with what this means for secondary students.

Some of the schools in our study (Balfour, Vancouver Technical, Kildonan, Georges Vanier) were once vocational schools, specializing in teaching those students who were not proceeding to further academic education.

> *We were looked upon as something of a dumping ground for the students who couldn't survive in other school situations. I think that today we still have to overcome that image. We are doing well...but there is still that perception that, "Oh, we'll send him to [Kildonan] because he is good with his hands."* (Teacher, Kildonan)

Today they have all become comprehensive high schools, as proud and concerned about their academic reputations as about their vocational courses. Although the technical areas are proud of the few females they have taught, there is still a pronounced imbalance in the ratio of females to males enrolled in technical courses.

At Kildonan, there are 12 distinct vocational programs that graduated 119 students in 1993. The principal is keen to redefine and reinvigorate vocational education as an important mode of learning. Vocational courses are linked with programs at the community colleges, giving them credibility and currency in an outside world. The school's program information book states:

> *The vocational program prepares students for employment and apprenticeship programs. Students may reduce the length of their apprenticeship program by the completion of a vocational major.*

Many parents are pleased that students can actively pursue programs suited to their interests and abilities.

Some vocational programs at Kildonan, like hairdressing, are self-contained. Others are integrated with academic subjects, and some combine vocational and academic programs effectively in a dual diploma program. A grant from the Walter and Duncan Gordon Charitable Foundation has motivated physics teachers to work with the mathematics department to create a new integrated approach to the two subjects. A business studies/marketing teacher is responsible for operating the school store.

> *We have it open during every period.... A great amount of the responsibility I leave to the students. Primarily when the students come in grade 10 their responsibilities are to work in the store, work on the cash register, stock items. Basically they are the workers.*

> *As they move on to grade 11, I give them a little more responsibility. All the displays are done by the grade 11s. Occasionally I will rely on grade 11s if I happen to have a student who could handle becoming a manager, because when I have the younger, grade 10 [students] I always try to have someone more experienced with them.....Rather than just [having them] work in the store and doing totally textbook work, I give them more responsibility.*
>
> *And then in grade 12, I have a handful of people who do all of the ordering, paying the bills, and make deposits. That is strictly...their job. I oversee everything. They enjoy that, they like the added responsibility from year to year.* (Teacher, Kildonan)

Vancouver Technical is also struggling with the place of vocational programs in the secondary school. The school has moved increasingly towards an emphasis on academic programs, but doing so has involved a kind of repudiation of the school's vocational past. Some painful decisions were made to close the foundry and end welding and similar vocational programs. There is a debate about changing the school's name to take away the stigma of the vocational. "Maybe they could change their name so it wouldn't sound so threatening or like there is nothing but barber shops and machine shops out back," comments a parent. The school's previous emphasis on the vocational is blamed for low standards and a poor reputation in the community.

The shift towards the academic, however, has caused concern among some teachers who argue that the large number of non-university-bound students "need job skills and job training much more than academic skills and academic education."

Students appear to appreciate the diversity of programs:

> *Tech helps them select a career that isn't just an academic one....They could take hairdressing, graphic arts, drafting, electronics, woodwork, fashion design. There are so many options that aren't available at the other schools. That's why students want to go to Tech.* (Student, Vancouver Technical)
>
> *I love that school. It's a very open school. They have a lot of good programs. They've got a lot of career prep...like their*

> *hairdressing. They've got auto mechanics, engineering, everything.* (Former student, Vancouver Technical)

The school is struggling to establish a new vision of vocational education, emphasizing academic excellence while meeting the needs of students with various academic and technical futures.

In grades 11 and 12, Vancouver Technical offers career preparation in 15 different areas: financial accounting, applied accounting, information management, marketing, computer science, hairdressing, fashion design, hospitality and food service (the school restaurant is student-run), tourism, human service career, electronics, graphic communication, general mechanics (automotive), machinist, and sports and recreation careers. The aim is to develop students' interest in a particular career and its options. Students learn about job opportunities and post-secondary training in the field they select; they write résumés and develop portfolios.

The school has a graphics program that emphasizes technical, production-related activities using computers.

> *Van Tech has a tradition with its print shop. If you go around the city...the big shooters in the production/printing industry, they came from Van Tech. So as soon as someone goes out and says, "I'm from Van Tech," immediately, they say: "Well, at least we know that you understand what a press does, what a darkroom looks like. We don't have to train you from scratch."* (Teacher, Vancouver Technical)

The school's hairdressing program is closely connected to the salons in the city and prepares students for the licensing exam. It includes 500 hours of work beyond the grade 12 graduation requirements. "We're better equipped than community colleges," says the head teacher. "We fundraise. I have an extensive video library. I tell my students, 'If you don't see it here, it doesn't exist.'" She hires her own substitute teachers, stocks the salon with products, and does its bookkeeping. "I do all the administrative things myself....We basically run our own school here within the school."

The school also has a Stepping Stones program that allows students to connect directly with the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) to take instruction in its welding and auto mechanics programs.

> *We identified [eight] students, and every afternoon they went to BCIT as a class, they had their instructor, and they began the C-level program as would an adult coming into the program. They worked through to the end of June and continued at BCIT to the end of July, approximately, and many of them went on after that, and many of them are employed.... One student came back and announced that he had won the BCIT provincial welding contest. Others were very excited because they could see the minute they finished this [program], there's a job waiting for them, which is the biggest incentive.* (Teacher, Vancouver Technical)

Some teachers recognize that no matter how rigorous technology education proves to be, it will be seen as a "softer," less worthy alternative.

> *Then you have an equal number of students who see the struggle that their parents are going through and want to go on to university to get a "better job," to increase or enhance their standard of living, and I think a number of parents also wish their kids to do that. If I think there is a concern, [it is that] some of those [expectations] are unrealistic, and...they might have a better chance of getting a job and be more comfortable...if we were able to counsel them into vocational courses. But I don't think that is unique to Tech. I think that is a phenomenon that's going through our whole society, that we have lost the ability to value the worker.* (Vice-principal, Vancouver Technical)

The school also needs to enrol more girls.

> *Well, when you drive by here and see the smokestacks and you say, "My kid is bright, she is university material, do I want to send her to Vancouver Technical School?" I mean, that is not where I send my girls.* (Parent)

Centennial illustrates the changes in vocational education in Quebec, where vocational enrolments in secondary schools fell from 18 per cent in 1976-77 to 4.6 per cent in 1988-99 (Economic Council of Canada, 1992). In the principal's office is a finely worked oak bookcase, and in the library intricate panelling and bookcases, all produced by students in the woodworking shops that used to be central to the school. Today, however, there are no woodworking shops and one walks through glass doors to a completely separate school where only adults study vocational subjects.

When the government took over control of secondary education from the Catholic Church in the 1960s, the ideal for secondary schooling was the polyvalent, offering both general education and vocational education. The expectation was that as many as 60 per cent of the students might enrol in vocational courses, but the forecasts were wrong. Vocational programs were initially very popular but became less so over time. Many schools, like Centennial and Les Etchemins, lost their vocational programs. Others, like Appalaches, never started them. A few schools specialized in vocational preparation, but the perception was that vocational students were "dumb." Vocational education was moved primarily to the cégep and to specialized schools at the senior secondary level. In 1990, a government report on vocational education reaffirmed the emphasis on general education for all students, and postponed vocational training until senior high school and the cégep. Students who have passed at least the required courses in secondary 3 (grade 9) can be admitted to the vocational program that leads to the secondary school vocational diploma, now offered in only a few schools.

There are few partnerships between secondary schools and business in Quebec, partly at least because of the lack of vocational courses. Appalaches, however, has established several initiatives related to the workplace. The mission of Challenge Education 2000 is to create good relations with employers in the region.

> *Young people are important to the region. It's important to support the teams that work closely with the young. We want to maintain ties with alumni of the polyvalent....To ensure they return, we have to give them opportunities while they're students here, find summer jobs for them, encourage local training programs, forge emotional bonds so that they will come back to the area.* (Case study, Appalaches)

Employers come to the school to try to interest students in what they do. Work experiences are organized for students at risk of leaving school. Entrepreneurship is emphasized to encourage students to contribute to the region's economic development.

Fifteen students created a business to manufacture newsletters.

> *These young people have experienced each stage of setting up a business: — organizing, operating and liquidating. [They did] market research, incorporation, issued stocks to finance the business, elected a board of directors, purchased materials, production, marketing, administration and bookkeeping, sale and liquidation of the company. The polyvalent also contributed to funding the project.*
>
> *What the young people got out of this experience is that together we can overcome our difficulties and that we must never give up. They were able to benefit from advice from people working in the field — administrators and lawyers as well as people in a support service for young entrepreneurs, which is a first in the region and a fine example of co-operation between the school and the business community.* (Case Study, Appalaches)

Appalaches is more open to new options like a technology stream. This program, for students who lack academic motivation and prefer working with their hands, integrates French, math, and science with technology, emphasizing team work among teachers and students. It offers a technology course in secondary 4 and 5 aimed at weaker students.

Co-op programs, which offer experience in the workplace, are offered at many schools across the country: Georges Vanier, Qitiqliq, Hartland, Langley, Kildonan, St. Benedict, Népisiguit. At Langley, work experience is compulsory and is linked to the fine arts program. At Qitiqliq, it is a way of making education relevant and meaningful for students. At Sydney, co-op is an extra for conscientious students or for students at risk of leaving school: "We don't want to jeopardize their graduation. It's only a companion credit." It is not included when calculating aggregates and averages.

> *At grade 9 we put them out for the equivalent of three weeks maximum. That could be in a block or a week at a time. If a student is still in junior high and is 16 or older and looking to quit, it is a motivator, so why not use it, if you have the industrial base to support all of this. But when you consider our industrial base, we have hundreds and hundreds of*

> *employers. It's a little bit of a carrot in the program for some students.*
>
> *We explain to them: "You're going to have to be out of school for 120 hours at a work site. You are going to have to do an extra 40 hours in school. You're going to have a major paper or project. You may have individual assignments." We ask each teacher to look at who applied: "Do you feel that they could spare that time from your class?" It amounts to 15 days over the year. It doesn't mean that they have to be an A student. This year we have students that are maybe only C students.*
>
> *If we have a student, for example, who wants to explore medicine, we link it with the biology course. It has to have an in-school link. They cannot take co-op ed by itself. They have to graduate and pass that biology, then they get an extra credit in biology if they pass the co-op ed.... It's not recognized by the universities for entrances. We do not take it into the aggregate or average....We didn't want teachers to be upset by an attempt to equate what goes on in the classroom with what goes on out there. We don't have as much control, but it is nice that they get the companion credit. It looks lovely on a résumé. Students can get an interview quicker if they say they have a co-op ed credit in their area.*
>
> *It seems that for the three years we've had the co-op ed, the highest number [of participants were] female. The first year it was all female. I don't know what that says. I think maybe a lot of the time the young men are involved in other things and maybe feel that it would infringe on their time more.* (Co-operative education program co-ordinator, Sydney)

At Georges Vanier, the co-op program is an integral part of the curriculum. It combines classroom work with work experience in a variety of areas, including technical (welding, plumbing, electrical, general factory work), auto pre-apprenticeship (in partnership with Canadian Tire), hairdressing pre-apprenticeship, special needs (in any area), early childhood education (daycare, nursery placements, family studies). Students work as bank tellers, secretarial assistants, teaching assistants, veterinary helpers, computer technicians, auto mechanics, hairdressers, laboratory chemists, welders, travel and tourism representatives, clerks, dietary assistants, security officers, fitness consultants, sales clerks, firefighters' assistants, small business entrepreneurs, and so on. They are not paid.

The courses are taught by teachers across the school, although most come from "vocational" departments. Some programs provide only short-term training, while others extend over several years. Some are half- and some are full-day programs. Students normally may earn up to four credits in the co-op program, although some may earn as many as six. Some choose co-op solely as a means of learning about employment.

Enrolment in the program varies, but at the time of the case study, it was 125 students per semester. Vanier's co-op office is tied into the school board's mainframe computer that lists up to 7,000 employers willing to take on co-op students. The co-op co-ordinators regard students as "ambassadors of the school" and ensure that they are well prepared to go out for placement interviews.

Ninety per cent of all co-op students recommended for interviews in the field get taken on. Although no records are kept on hiring, the school's impression is that many are hired. Others enrol in formal apprenticeship programs in the community colleges.

> *It's so rewarding to see the look on students' faces, their attitudes when you have found them something specific for their needs.... They walk away, just literally floating, saying, "This is wonderful, I've never had such a great experience in school before."* (Program co-ordinator, Georges Vanier)

Vocational courses are either an extra or a second-class subject in these secondary schools. One could argue that secondary school vocational education is being abandoned. There continue to be limited vocational courses in some of the schools but enrolment is small, equipment is often out of date, and status is usually low. Those schools that began as technical schools — often distinguished ones — have converted to academic institutions, even changing their name to "academy," "collegiate," or at least "comprehensive," to identify their new, academic mission. Vocational training is increasingly seen as something that happens in post-secondary institutions.

However, various kinds of work-experience and applied courses are being added to the secondary school curriculum in some schools to motivate students, to teach social responsibility, to orient students to the labour market, and to reinvigorate traditional subjects such as science, mathematics, and social studies. Linkages with the workplace are a matter of debate and attention in some of these schools. Abandoning the vocational in favour of the academic narrows schooling in ways that make some educators uncomfortable. As more and more students stay in school to the age of 17 or 18 and as more go through the academic program, the question of reintegrating the academic and the vocational so that academic knowledge has relevance and application outside schools and universities becomes an important question for policy and practice. Particularly in special programs for talented and at-risk students, schools want to provide courses that offer concrete connections to the labour market.

Including Aboriginal People: Whose Heritage?

The issue of knowledge for and about Aboriginal people is important in a number of schools, particularly schools with a substantial Native population. How central should an understanding of Aboriginal culture, history, language, and spirituality be for Aboriginal students? For all students in Canada? What should be taught? How should it be taught and who should teach it? These are questions not just for Aboriginal people, but for all Canadians.

At most schools, there is little discussion of Aboriginal curriculum content. At Jeanne-Mance at the time of our case study, 16 students were involved in an exchange with students from the Inuit community of Povungnituk. Two Montagnais artists also worked with students. One student is quoted as saying that the best thing in the school was

> *what we did last year in fine arts. We talked about the Amerindians, then about Amerindian art. I loved it. We learned about their history and art and we also mounted an exhibit in a museum.*

In Saskatchewan, where over half the Aboriginal students are in provincially controlled schools, Native studies is a provincially approved option for social studies in grade 11. It is taught at Balfour, where eight per cent of the students are Aboriginal, and it is becoming increasingly popular. In 1991, Sydney Academy, in consultation with the Band council and educators from the Membertou reserve, introduced the first, full-credit high school Native studies course in Nova Scotia. Since then, a second course has been added.

> *Senior administrators from the local board attended a symposium on Native studies and Native education. We met with 25 Native people with varying levels of education who shared with us their concerns with the current way of educating Natives. I came back and asked a teacher who does nothing in moderation if he would put on a Native Studies course....The course has been in operation for four years and has an enrolment of 30 students or more each year, 50 per cent Native and 50 per cent non-Native. To say it has been successful is an understatement....This is now a model course for other Native studies programs in the province. That's something we are really proud of.* (Principal, Sydney)

Vancouver Technical school has developed a separate program called Tumanos ("Guardian Spirit" in Coast Salish) for First Nations students from across Vancouver. It enrols 20 students in grade 8, 20 in grade 9, and a few grade 10 students. Students at risk tend to enrol, but it is an academic program that emphasizes the history, cultural beliefs, and practices of Aboriginal peoples. The aim of Tumanos is to graduate more First Nations students from high school and send them on to post-secondary education, as well as to preserve and nurture their traditions and beliefs. Students enter the program in grade 8 and are on a different timetable from the rest of the school.

The involvement of First Nations staff in the Tumanos program fosters close relationships between the First Nations community and students in the program.

> *Parents are Indian, children are Indian, I'm an Indian, right? You go to Indian things, like a pow-wow, ceremonies. It's natural that we get to know each other.* (Alternative program worker, Vancouver Technical)

> *The community loves us.... We are the model for First Nations education in the country.* (Teacher, Vancouver Technical)

Recently, the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre donated a cedar log worth $15,000 for a totem-pole carving project: students will carve the log, guided by artist-carvers from the community. The finished work will find a permanent home in front of Vancouver Technical.

Aboriginal spiritual practices like smudging ceremonies have been introduced, but not without some discussion and tension. Initially, administrators were sceptical. One staff member recalled the attitude being: "We can't have any fire or any flame in any school building. You can't smoke on school grounds. And that concludes that." The staff decided to try again when one of their team left, upsetting the students. A teacher, during a talking circle with students and staff, decided that a special healing ceremony was in order.

> *We went outside to the far end of the campus....There are some trees there. We formed our circle, and we smudged there. And then I came back and told the principal that we had done it. "No problem," she said, "I understand." And I told her...we had done it because it was a healing ritual, to say we're grieving to see [our team member] go, because he was so close to us.*

The next year, the principal officially approved the holding of smudging ceremonies within the school. The next step was to explain the significance of smudging to teachers who were not involved with Tumanos. "We were asked by teachers, 'What about the *School Act*? Isn't this religion? How come you're doing this in a public school?'" Tumanos staff members made the following points:

> *First, we are all one culture, or one set of cultures, in that room. Secondly, smudging is always voluntary; anything spiritual in this class is always voluntary. Students who don't want to participate, don't....Thirdly, multiculturalism, as it has come about in Canada, has become prohibitive. It has become, "You may not, you may not, you may not." Why not look at multiculturalism...in the opposite way, as, "You are invited to, you are invited to, you are invited to"?*

In Aboriginal schools — and there are three in this study — integration of Aboriginal knowledge and culture into the school is central. It is not a question of what should be added if there is time, in a separate program, or as a matter of academic interest. But in the mainstream education system Aboriginal knowledge and culture are considered marginal issues.

The majority of the Native Indian and Inuit population in this country is under 25 years of age. Data from the 1986 census indicate that 45 per cent of the on-reserve and 24 per cent of the off-reserve Indian population have a less than grade 9 education. A 1991 survey of the Northwest Territories estimates that one out of three adults has grade 9 or less (Department of Education, 1991), and a labour force survey (Northwest Territories, 1989) estimated that 79 per cent of the Aboriginal population in the Keewatin region has grade 9 or less. Only 17 per cent of the non-Indian population has less than grade 9. These statistics call attention to the pressing need to develop a successful approach to Aboriginal education.

The principal at Peguis discussed the issues of culture and religion with researchers:

> *Because Peguis...is a band school, it is important that there [be] a culture—our Native culture—something that belongs to the people of this community.*

But there are differences of opinion among members of the Peguis band about the teaching of culture. Some want more Native languages, Native spirituality, and indigenous knowledge in the curriculum, while others are fundamentalist Christians who are worried that native culture and spirituality are "the work of the devil."

> *When the children attend the school, I see them all being children. I cannot divide them and say to them that because they are Anglican or Pentecostal they cannot participate in this activity, because it is cultural. This is very difficult to explain to a child. We need to be able to celebrate together. The school needs direction on this issue from the community. There is a very urgent need for the history of our people to be taught. There is a need for all of our people to understand the culture, because we are Indian people. Our children must never be ashamed of being Indian.* (Principal, Peguis)

> *If you get into far-out things, if you will, somebody wanting*

> *a change in the Lord's Prayer, or some scripture read, or some religious things taught, for the most part we say no, because, well, there's a reaction from other people, and we're going to have a problem. So we don't do things so that we don't have a problem. If, on the other hand, somebody comes along and [suggests] cultural things [from] the Indians' point of view — dancing and prayers, smoking the pipe, etc. — then we also say no, for the most part to a lot of that because it would cause a terrible rift in the community and tear the school apart.* (Superintendent, Peguis)

The community is united, however, in wanting to ensure that Peguis students can compete for jobs and post-secondary education with students from other schools.

> *From time to time you hear about these various schools across Canada that are doing their thing, as it were, and it makes a media flash. Often though, I find that while they may be doing something that is really important, and maybe new, it is a flash in the pan. I think you need more than that. I think you need a solidarity all the way from the bottom to the top. I'll give you an example.*
>
> *These survival schools — I've looked at several of them across Canada and, while survival may be the subject at hand and being played up and worked at, [the emphasis on survival] neglects, to a very great degree in my perception, the curriculum and the basic necessities for the kids to progress in academics. I've found that a real weakness.*
>
> *And there are people, Indian people in Canada, who say, "Well, the white man's system is no good," and they reject all of it, and adopt Indian philosophy and Indian teachings to the detriment, I think, of the kids' total development. We try to reach some kind of a balance in there.*
>
> *We can't really get into things outside of...a normal school curriculum... because we've still got to pay close attention to what is required for [the students] to go to university or post-secondary training.* (Superintendent, Peguis)

Peguis uses the regular Manitoba curriculum, supplemented by some classes in the Ojibway language and Native studies. The mix is negotiated with the community, and over time more Native-studies content is being added.

> *It's developing to provide the kind of education that's relevant and interesting and would enable our students to survive not only within the reserve and become aware of their own uniqueness and their culture and language and history and, you know, their rights as Treaty Indian people as well as Canadian citizens, but [also] their knowledge and awareness of the outside systems...values and norms, so that they'll be able to survive and compete in both areas...feel good about themselves as Indian people and have the confidence to withstand any of the negative experiences...like discrimination and prejudice and racism. I think that, with the way the school has developed, it will produce pretty solid students in the end.*
> (Chief, Peguis Band)

At Joe Duquette, a high school in the Saskatoon Catholic board, teaching about Native traditions is central. Students at Joe Duquette are urban Aboriginal people who may have lost touch with their own history and culture, or who are living away from their reserve community. Native culture is seen as necessary for the academic curriculum, rather than a distraction from it. The sacred circle, the sweetgrass ceremony, trips to the sweat lodge, feasts, and respect for the teachings of Elders are core activities. Native traditions inform every aspect of school life, and spirituality is central to the school's definitionof both Native traditions and school ethics.

Flying into Arviat in the Northwest Territories, one is struck by the harshness of the climate. Not very long ago, survival in this place, covered with snow for ten months of the year, required skills and knowledge developed over centuries. Learning meant learning to live off the land. But the school curriculum today does not include catching walrus and making sleds. Qitiqliq follows the Alberta curriculum and, in the senior grades, prepares students for Alberta examinations and university in the south. Students have to be able to move back and forth between Inuit and white, southern traditions. The former chair of the Community Education Committee remarked, "Students have to live a dual life — life in the community and life in the school."

Qitiqliq places a good deal of emphasis on students' getting the credentials necessary for post-secondary education and doing well on the standard curriculum — even if the pictures in Alberta textbooks have little meaning for them. The teachers are from the south. They know the curriculum, but they do not have traditional northern skills and knowledge. The school hires Elders to teach students Inuit ways and to ensure they have some knowledge of their traditional culture. The researchers describe a Qitiqliq lesson in traditional culture:

> *Today the senior secondary students are visiting the igloo. There are five students from grade 12, three girls and two boys. They are sitting on skins laid out on blocks of snow. This snow bench functions as a sitting area. In the old days, it would also be used for sleeping. One Elder begins to strip caribou meat from the bone as he translates for another Elder who talks about the importance of learning about the old ways and preserving them. He points to his ulu, a woman's carving knife, and explains its function. The ulu has a single blade in the shape of a half-moon that is easier to manage than a double blade. Women use this for stripping the caribou meat, cutting fish, and preparing skins for sewing. The smaller room next door to this area is the workroom. Two female Elders are showing students how to prepare the skins for sewing and how to bead. The Elder also talks about the importance of stories. When asked what he thinks are the most important things to be preserved, he replies the language, the culture, and stories. He also says that teaching students both languages today is important.*

The school has developed a soapstone-carving workshop to preserve and extend traditional skills. But, central as the traditional skills are to the community, they seem peripheral to the curriculum in the secondary school. Parents' concerns and expectations about the school curriculum vary. The usefulness of schooling is not accepted by all. Some parents feel that the school should provide more support for preserving Inuit culture, while others see cultural teaching and, in some cases, language teaching as a parental responsibility to be carried out at home. As now constituted, the school is organized to teach "southern" subjects, but a proposed new curriculum, called Innuqatigiit, offers opportunities to integrate Inuit values, beliefs, and traditions into not just the cultural inclusion program, but into the academic subjects as well.

Bringing Aboriginal knowledge together with the knowledge of a larger white world involves issues of identity, power, and opportunity. Using the school to preserve, explore, and develop Aboriginal students' sense of who they are means defining a curriculum with a much more central place for Aboriginal knowledge and ways of knowing. But to provide access to opportunities in a larger non-Aboriginal world, Aboriginal schools are intent on keeping the academic core — defined in terms of mainstream knowledge — clearly in view. Schools want to add knowledge about Aboriginal people, but not in a way that might disadvantage students. Redefining the core seems too radical and risky. Adding changes gradually appears to be the favoured process, but one that is filled with tensions and conflicts.

Whose Language?

Language proficiency is key to success in school. Questions about the appropriate language of instruction and the role of second and third languages in the curriculum raise the same issues of opportunity, diversity, and identity discussed above. The majority of Canadian schools aim to teach students Canada's two official languages. French and English are not treated similarly in francophone and anglophone milieus, for the preservation of French is an issue whereas the preservation of English is assumed. The teaching of Aboriginal languages is also intertwined with Aboriginal identity, cultural preservation, renewal, and survival. As Canada becomes more multicultural, classrooms, especially in large urban centres, become more multilingual. Asian languages are increasingly taught in Canadian schools. Responses to students' use of their mother tongue in schools varies across the country. The relation of language to the core curriculum depends partly on the status of the language involved and partly on the community's view of what schooling should be about.

Majority- and minority-language education rights are embedded in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Section 23 of the Charter ensures that Canadian citizens who have been educated in French or English in this country and who live in a province where their language is in the minority have the right to have their children educated in their own language.

Quebec legislation is designed to protect the French language in a continent that is predominantly English-speaking. In Quebec francophone schools, the French language has a primacy that is enforced by law and reiterated in school policies. Traditionally, immigrants to the province chose English-language schooling, but in 1977, Bill 101 required all new immigrants to study in French. The proportion of allophones (people whose first language is neither French nor English) who attended French-language schools increased from 27 per cent in 1978 to 82 per cent in 1994. Generally speaking, students whose parents did not attend an English-language school in Canada must attend French-language schools. Bill 101 prohibits English immersion for students in French-language schools, but the study of English is compulsory in the secondary grades.

One can see the effects at Jeanne-Mance, which enrols a large number of allophone students. The school population includes representation from 71 different countries and 38 different mother-tongue language groups. The school makes students promise to speak French in class, during school activities, and when an adult addresses them. The library includes only French books. The welcome classes take place in a separate classroom that uses computer programs developed recently at the school to teach French across the curriculum. Students attend during the day for one period, and also during lunch and after school for extra practice. The school makes an attempt to recognize other cultures in the social activities of the welcome classes. At the community level, the school lends its rooms for teaching languages other than French and English, especially Portuguese. It emphasizes intercultural education, but stresses that the French language is key for all students' success, academically and socially.

In schools outside Quebec, there is more diversity of approach. The New Brunswick Ministry of Education is divided into anglophone and francophone sections that are parallel and independent. All provinces except Alberta require a second-language credit for graduation, although it does not have to be French. French immersion programs are popular with anglophone students from well-educated families, and with students who want an extra academic challenge at school. Sydney Academy lamented the loss of its high-status French immersion program. The French immersion program at Vancouver Technical is often categorized as elite because a disproportionate number of French immersion students are eligible for honours or advanced placement classes when they reach grades 11 and 12. Students start secondary school taking most of their subjects in French, although only one grade 12 course is in French. By that time, students are studying the core academic subjects in English. The program draws students from all over the east side of Vancouver, and it is seen to supplement, not detract from, the academic core and the study of English.

Forty-two per cent of the students at Vancouver Technical were born outside Canada. As of the fall of 1993, 46 countries and 19 languages were represented in the school. The two-thirds of the students who do not speak English as a first language are permitted to speak their home language in school, and the halls echo with different languages. The library includes books in Cantonese, Russian, Spanish, Polish, Tagalog, Vietnamese, and French. The English-as-a-second-language program (ESL) enrols ten per cent of the students at any one time and placement depends on a test administered by the school board. At first students are taught in separate classes, but they are soon integrated into the regular program and withdrawn for extra help when necessary. Transitional courses are offered in English, social studies, and science. A typical timetable for a student would be three blocks of English (with the same teacher), science, social studies, regular or ESL math, and two electives. The ESL head explains that students learn better when encouraged to discuss and problem-solve in their first languages:

> *If you have someone who's had a very good educational background and is almost an adult — 17, 18 years old — it appears to me that the worst thing you can do is make him feel as if he's gone back to kindergarten, in terms of affective and also in terms of his own cognitive growth. And it's one of the reasons why at Tech, unlike, I believe, other schools that I have been in, we don't discourage use of the first language or the native language of the speaker.*

This philosophy is not shared by everyone, although there is research to support it (Ellis, 1994; Auerbach, 1993; Cummins and Swain, 1986). Some ESL students believe that speaking their first language at school hinders their acquisition of English, and their parents often agree. Some regular program teachers at Vancouver Technical make their preference for the use of English at all times clear to students:

> *When [the teacher] saw me in the hallway with my friends, she said, "Speak English." But I feel that's right because...it's good to speak English more and practise [it] and improve more. Your own language...you can speak at home or somewhere else.* (Student, Vancouver Technical)

Although the school does not make a rule about it, informal social situations encourage non-English-speaking students to speak English at school. Although it is easier and more natural for immigrant students to speak their own language with their same-language friends, they understand that English can also be a ticket out of social isolation within the school.

> *When I didn't know that much English, [other students] really tried to avoid me.... When they know what you are talking about, they...like you better. Now they like me. We are buddies and friends...and we hang around and everything. But before it was, "Oh, geez, I wish I had a friend so that I could talk to somebody."* (Student, Vancouver Technical)

One student wanted to avoid being perceived as "rude" by English-speaking peers and teachers:

> *In grade 5, when I don't know English, I speak Cantonese in class. They think I'm really rude, so that I started to speak English in grade 6 in class. And I feel better.* (Student, Vancouver Technical)

An ESL teacher confirmed that English-speaking students do "tend to stereotype" students who do not speak English, and some parents of English-speaking students confirmed that their children felt "uncomfortable" or "intimidated" when other students spoke in their first languages at school.

Pain Court is dedicated to preserving the French language in a predominantly English-speaking southern Ontario farming community. French is the first language for only 3.5 per cent of families in the county and an actively used language for 1.5 per cent. Pain Court is a French-language Catholic school that owes its existence to Section 23 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (discussed above). In addition to enrolling students whose parents attended French-language schools, it also enrols students who speak enough

French to "survive," mostly students who were in immersion programs in the elementary grades.

Pain Court has many of the characteristics of a French immersion program, offering a mostly academic curriculum. About half the graduates attend university and 80 per cent go on to post-secondary education. Only five of the 54 grade 10 students (grade 10 is the first grade where streaming levels become formal) are taking courses at the general level; the rest are academic students. All students take the same courses and do the same assignments, although general-level students are graded on a different scale. There are more female than male students enrolled. The school aims to prepare students for university and jobs, and also to preserve the French heritage. A parent comments: "It's an ideal opportunity to speak both languages, and this will definitely help them find jobs later on. I also like the atmosphere here." There is no contradiction here. Being able to speak two languages is linked with getting a better job.

> *Our vision is to be able to provide an education that will allow all students to go to a French-language university, to prepare them for professional opportunities in French, and also to develop and maintain their cultural heritage...to make up for all that the francophone community has lost over time.* (Vice-principal, Pain Court)

Pain Court students operate on the border between French and English but do not seem to have an identity problem. The school enrols many students who do not speak French at home, but who define themselves as bilingual persons who use English rather than French most of the time.

At school, although everything is supposed to take place in French, students regularly use English in the corridors and outside the classrooms. Teachers usually speak French with the students, but the researchers observed that they occasionally use English. Generally, however, in classroom discussions teachers will not respond to students' comments in English. This is a world where opportunity is linked to speaking both languages: French represents the world of authority and work; the other world is family and friends, where everything goes on in English. At Pain Court, identity spans two traditions with considerable success.

For many Aboriginal people, education is a means of preventing the erosion of their languages and restoring the visibility and viability of their cultures. But Aboriginal languages are not widely taught and not easily integrated into the academic curriculum. Inuktitut is the home language of virtually all the students at Qitiqliq. It will be the working language of the new territory of Nunavut. A 1982 report by a special committee on education, *Learning: Tradition and Change in the Northwest Territories*, strongly supported the increased use of Native languages in territorial schools and devoted 15 pages to recommendations about the teaching and learning of Native languages. However, the committee also acknowledged that language of instruction is a hotly debated issue, that there is no clear consensus in most communities about which language parents would prefer, and that parents and teachers may both be unaware of the implications of first-and second-language programs.

The vice-principal of Qitiqliq reports that about ten years ago the community was "torn apart" on the language issue. Children refused to be called by their Inuit names and had bad feelings about traditional ways. The pull of the modern world — snowmobiles, TV, and jeans — is powerful. Legislation now allows local community education committees to mandate programs of Inuktitut instruction within a bilingual program model. In 1990, members of the Arviat Community Education Committee expressed unequivocal support for an Inuktitut-English bilingual program. However, people in Arviat hold different views of the language situation in the community and in the Keewatin region in which the school is located. Some feel instruction in Inuktitut, including an understanding of different dialects, is critical for keeping the language and way of life alive. Others fear that it detracts from learning other, academic subjects that will be important for employment opportunities, and feel that language can be taught at home.

In Qitiqliq, instruction in the secondary grades is in English, although Inuktitut is a required subject. Only one secondary teacher speaks Inuktitut. Signs and school documents are mostly in English, although classrooms are marked in Inuktitut. Students have access to English-language television via satellite. With the help of classroom aides, Inuktitut has been the language of instruction at the primary level for ten years. Recently, an initiative by the Northwest Territories Department of Education has resulted in more than half of the elementary teaching staff being Inuit and thus speaking Inuktitut, and Inuktitut is frequently heard in the elementary school halls and classrooms. In secondary school, Inuktitut is heard less frequently in classrooms, but occasionally in hallways.

Cree is taught at Joe Duquette and Ojibway at Peguis. Native students at these schools often do not know their languages, and the debate about whether to take school time to teach them is similar to the debate in Arviat. Parents and students are of two minds about their importance.

> *I think we should also probably have French here, but I'm not sure that's politically acceptable in light of the fact that there's a big push for Indian culture, heritage and Indian languages....I think that with French training the kids would probably have more advantage in terms of getting jobs later.* (Superintendent, Peguis)

> *I don't see Native studies being as successful as it could be, or the Native languages program ....Take the Native language elementary [level] —it's not spoken at home, okay? So there's no continuity from class to home, home to class. And it seems that there's a lot of apathy amongst the students concerning Native studies and concerning anything Native. They know it's there, but they kind of don't want anything to do with it.... It's like they're not proud....They have very low self-esteem about themselves...as Native people...* (Native studies teacher, Peguis)

All three Aboriginal communities in this study struggle to maintain the viability of their languages and cultures. They see the teaching of Native languages as a way to develop adolescent self-concepts and cultural identities while reducing academic underachievement and school failure.

The teaching of language is critical to education, but the language taught is the subject of many political tensions in Canadian society today. The teaching and learning of language involves issues of identity as well as issues of opportunity; it involves socio-political, not just psycho-linguistic issues. Second languages are part of the academic core of the secondary school, but some languages offer more job opportunities than others. Schools fulfil their cultural mission by preserving languages, keeping them alive, and developing them for a new generation. It is the trade-offs that are a matter of debate in these communities.

Spirituality and Religion

In some provinces, schools are denominational, based firmly and constitutionally in the religious traditions of a particular group. Unlike the United States, where religion and public schooling are rigidly separated, some Canadian schools are responsible for teaching religion; indeed, religious commitments inform their entire curriculum. The relationship between schooling and the religious commitments of families is controversial, especially since, as was outlined in the previous chapter, many schools are committed to teaching the "whole" student.

In most schools in the study, there is very little discussion of religious education. Schools in communities where churches are active, however, are affected by them. In Hartland, located in what is considered the Bible belt of New Brunswick, the religion of the community provides the school with a clearly defined set of values and expectations. Twenty per cent of the members of a recent Hartland graduating class attended Bible school their first year out of high school. A pastor comes into the school occasionally to discuss religious issues and Bible passages with interested students. Church leaders are consulted, at least informally, on school policy. Sex education was only introduced after close consultation and approval from the ministers in town. At New Norway, in Alberta, similar informal but close consultation takes place.

Because Newfoundland has denominational boards, Grandy's River has courses in religious education for grades 7 through 9, and offers eastern religion, the Old Testament, western religions and the New Testament in senior high school. As noted earlier in this chapter, it has been only 30 years since education in Quebec moved from the direct control of the Catholic Church to control by the state through Protestant and Catholic school boards. A course in religious and moral education is required in Quebec secondary schools and most Catholic schools have an *animateur de pastorale (spiritual* counsellor) to look after the spiritual life of the school.

What being Catholic means for schools is defined in a publication of the Catholic committee of the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation (1993):

> *The Catholic public school integrates the beliefs and values of the Catholic religion into its educational plan; by respecting the freedoms of conscience and religion.*

> *The Catholic public school provides Catholic moral and religious instruction in each grade of the primary and secondary levels.*
>
> *The Catholic public school follows the Catholic moral and religious instruction curriculum approved by the Catholic committee. It also follows the local curriculum for Catholic moral and religious instruction approved by this committee. It uses the manuals and materials approved by the Catholic Committee for this instruction.*
>
> *At each secondary grade level, a minimum of 50 hours must be dedicated to Catholic moral and religious instruction.*
>
> *The Catholic public school must provide supplementary Catholic pastoral activities during the time devoted to education or in addition to this time.*

At Les Etchemins and Appalaches, religious practices are not very pronounced. The spiritual counsellor is involved in a variety of activities with young people — working with Amnesty International, elderly people, and elementary school students, and serving meals to the disadvantaged. At Jeanne-Mance, which includes 55 Buddhist, 48 Islamic, and 33 Orthodox Jewish students as well as the dominant Catholic population, the spiritual counsellor said:

> *My responsibility is to help young people reflect, to go inside themselves, regardless of their religion. In the case of Christian students, this means using the gospel more; for the others, it means encouraging them to go further by enabling them to get involved in society.* (Spiritual counsellor, Jeanne-Mance)

Until 1984, Catholic separate schools in Ontario were funded by the province only up to grade 10, reflecting the situation of those schools at the time of the *British North America Act* and the ambivalence in Ontario about the legitimacy of a publicly funded Catholic education system. In 1985, the province decided to begin funding Catholic schools equally by providing them with funding for one additional grade each year up to Ontario Academic Courses. As of the 1990-91 school year, approximately 30 per cent of Ontario students were enrolled in Roman Catholic schools. About one-third of the 170 school boards in Ontario are Roman Catholic. Pain Court and St. Benedict in our study are Ontario Catholic schools.

St. Benedict's Catholic traditions provide the base from which education is provided. Its Catholicism is evidenced in the curriculum, in the liturgies, in the crucifixes and notices around the building, and in teachers' behaviour and relations with students. There is a lay chaplain on staff.

> *Catholicism plays a very freeing role in the school. It gives direction and expectations.....You can do things in a Catholic school that I hadn't been able to do teaching in public schools. That assumes that there's an openness to spirituality.* (Teacher, St. Benedict)

> *I hope, when I teach, God is present in my teaching.... Some people think [my subject area] has nothing to do with spirituality, but I find it exactly the opposite. It brings about a lot of questions of values, morals and ethics....The board's philosophy is that the questions students ask can be responded to...which is wonderful, because my friends that teach with other boards do not have that option at all. So I find I have a lot of freedom within the school.* (Teacher, St. Benedict)

These quotes point to the role religion plays in opening up moral and religious issues for discussion. Subjects like AIDS, racism, poverty, and death are discussed, not only in the required religion and family life classes, but throughout the curriculum. One teacher notes that students in a public school might be "ridiculed" for exploring their own spirituality. At St. Benedict, moral and spiritual issues are integrated into the curriculum.

Pain Court's mission includes protecting the faith and teaching Christian values. People at the school say that religion is less important than it once was and that the Catholic Church has a less important role in the community than it once had.

> *I would say that there are very few students who are here because this is a Catholic school....I don't think that the "Catholic-ness" of the school is the main thing, even though other people would like this to be so.* (Teacher, Pain Court)

As at St. Benedict, however, the church's presence encourages reflection on values and spirituality.

> *One of the questions I think the Catholic school should ask students is what does Jesus represent for you? And the school should help provide the answer not only through instruction but also through activities, celebrations, reflections, and work.* (Spiritual counsellor, Pain Court)

Joe Duquette operates under an agreement with a Catholic school board in Saskatoon. The Catholic Church has traditionally had an interest in Native education, and the Métis in particular, because of its mission to serve the oppressed. Although Catholic teachers are preferred, it is Native spirituality, not Catholicism that is the central concept of survival at the school. The emphasis on the spiritual (the sweetgrass ceremony, the sweat lodge, the presence of Elders, the sacred circle, and the sacred pipe ceremony) and its connection to the cultural (Native traditions, values, culture, fine and performing arts, survival skills, Native studies and languages) is what makes Joe Duquette distinctive. A Catholic priest who has been a supporter of the school since its beginning and who is a staff member, is firmly committed to Native spirituality and sees it as compatible with Catholicism. He sees his role as being to:

> *bring the element of religion...to the lives of the students, not so much through a formal program on a day-to-day basis but more through the living example and the day-to-day interaction with students.*

Although many of the students who come to the school do not know about Native spiritual traditions, they all participate in them and learn. Students may decline to participate in the act of smudging, but they are required to join the circle. Respect guides behaviour. Most, although not all, students appreciate the policies.

> *They do sweetgrass, which is good; everybody needs a prayer once in a while. Elders are here. You can ask them something you don't know about the sweetgrass or the sweat lodge.* (Student, Joe Duquette)

The circle is a recurring image in Native spirituality —

sweetgrass circles, healing circles, and the sacred circle of life, symbolized by the medicine wheel. These circles are omnipresent in the school's practices, as well as being part of the modern survival skills course, the healthy lifestyles program, and Native studies. In the healthy lifestyles program,

> *the school introduces a new theme each month, ranging through everything that's relevant to the students — drugs, alcohol, sexual abuse, grieving and working on spirituality, that whole concept of the medicine wheel, bringing those four components together.* (Teacher, Joe Duquette)

There are some "never-ending tensions" between the healing focus and the academic one, particularly as students move into the senior grades.

> *Over the years, [school policy has] moved to putting more emphasis on the healing process and so forth. Now, we have sort of a balance. And it's a very delicate balance. Sometimes we as academics — and I think I fit that category because I teach the upper grades — we're concerned about where our students are going and what they're learning.* (Teacher, Joe Duquette)

Teachers and the parent council appreciate the emphasis on teaching about spirituality: "Nobody can work academically if they're messed up anyway." On the other hand:

> *... [even though this focus on healing is good], I see much to the detriment of any kind of academic program. We try and do everything and so something has to miss. We pare it down to the bare bones. I want to make sure my grade 11 and 12 students come out of here equally competent as students out of other high schools, but it's hard when you are dealing with...students living in poverty, single parenting, alcohol and drug problems, incest or whatever in the past.* (Teacher, Joe Duquette)

Some students feel the healing and cultural components are well balanced with academic learning.

> *They teach you Native studies, Cree, cultural arts like dancing and stuff. They also teach algebra, English, all those academic classes. You get a mixture of both, not too much of this and too much of that.* (Student, Joe Duquette)

At Peguis, the introduction of Native spirituality into the school was much more contentious, for many on the reserve are evangelical Christians.

> *...the Christian element in our community tried to suppress the cultural revival in this reserve, and they wanted to have it removed completely from the school, from the community.* (Chief, Peguis Band)

Part of the debate concerned the legitimate role of the school.

> *All I expect the school to do is educate my children with the basic tools to succeed. I can handle the rest. I take full responsibility for the actions of my children. At the same time, the school has certain responsibilities, norms of society that should be adhered to, to gain the respect of students. They should stick to the basic tools and guide students toward careers they are interested in developing. Family life education, spirituality— these are my responsibility, not the school's.* (Parent, Peguis)

The Peguis chief notes, "It was a difficult issue to stand up for...[but] I think the community came out more healthy in the end, because they knew that their rights were secure."

In communities who agree on religious and ethical issues, it is possible to have a curriculum that discusses these issues explicitly. In more diverse communities, it is much more difficult and is approached cautiously. Religious affiliation allows the discussion of ethical and spiritual issues in the school and provides an agreed-upon base from which to teach. But all schools must deal to some extent with controversial questions of meaning and morality. One solution is to allow for the discussion of spirituality and religion in separate courses on the periphery of the curriculum. Even this approach, however, may be controversial, as at Joe Duquette.

The Fine Arts

Although artistic products are often displayed on parent nights as one of the major accomplishments of students, the status of fine arts in secondary schools is decidedly marginal. In some of the schools in this study, the arts were not taught for credit at all. In no provinces are they required for graduation, although British Columbia is changing that in 1995. They are, however, taught in the elementary and early secondary grades in most schools, and they are available as extracurricular activities virtually everywhere. Bands, choirs, and theatre productions are common.

At most schools, fine arts are an option for students. Their prominence varies, depending on the school. Balfour and Vancouver Technical have particularly strong fine arts programs: they allow students to pursue music and art to a high level of proficiency and are beginning to integrate technology into the arts. In both schools, however, teachers are aware of the difficulties of keeping up enrolment in what are often seen as "frill" subjects. At Corktown, arts are central to the appearance and culture of the school, framing many cross-curricular initiatives. However, making a fine arts course into a core academic subject on a par with language, science, math, or social studies challenges schools' assumptions about how the curriculum should be formed.

That challenge is the mission of Langley Fine Arts School. Langley was started by a group of parents and administrators who objected to the way most schools marginalize the fine arts. At Langley, fine arts were to be equal partners with other academic subjects. Fine arts would not just be added to the curriculum, they would transform the curriculum in every subject area, providing an education that balanced "right-brain" and "left-brain" thinking.

> *The four fine arts in our program — visual arts, dance, drama, and music — are equal partners with the other academics. By integrating the arts into all curriculum areas, we offer an alternative insight into goal-setting and creative problem-solving. We believe that acquiring an extensive background in the arts leads to a broader comprehension of the world and to varied career opportunities.* (Mission statement, Langley)

At this school the arts take up about 30 per cent of students' instructional time. Every week, students take seven 65-minute periods in a fine arts "major" and three in a "minor." Teaching time devoted to academic subjects is compressed, and students are expected to do more homework and learn independently. The additional time for the arts changes teachers' sense of what can be accomplished. Although there is a focus on performance, teachers do not just want to produce performers. They want students who are broadly educated in the arts, who are creative, able to evaluate their own work and others and who are informed about different traditions, techniques, and styles. They want to teach fine arts as another academic subject, which, they argue, takes more time as well as requiring a change in the conception of art and academics. As the district administrator puts it, "We want them to be able to talk about the art form that they happen to be interested in, and not just which finger to press down when they going to go and play a concert. "

School staff also wanted the arts to inform what was taught across the curriculum, studying art in history class, looking at the development of glazes in a science course, writing music, or creating visual representations of concepts in literature. Developing such a curriculum, in a single "arts" area or across areas, is an ambitious project. It is particularly so when provincial curriculum guidelines are not in place, and where there are few resources available. Teachers' connections with the larger world of the arts are critical to their success, but time is scarce when they also have to teach, develop policy and a spirit of collegiality in a new school, and continue to pursue their own art. The fact that the school is defined as a school of choice allows it to challenge conventions.

> *Parents are told absolutely categorically that [students] do not get quite as much academic time, therefore they must not waste time.... And if the students do not have enough interest in the arts to accept that, they should not be here.* (Case study, Langley)

There are still, however, debates about the relationship between academic knowledge and fine arts, or between one academic subject and another, and also about the economic value of the arts.

> *...Everybody realizes that the academic standards still have to be there, that these kids could go into college and university to become teachers and lawyers, doctors, dentists, whatever it is*

> *that they want to do. I mean, I am sure if you go into the hallway and you ask the average kid, especially grades 11 and 12 because they're getting close to that point where they have to make a decision, most of them will tell you, "Oh, I am not really interested in doing the arts as a living because I want to make some money." They know that they have to do something that is going to guarantee them income later on.* (Case study, Langley)

To make the arts equal partners with academic subjects has proved easier to say than to do, although the school approaches its task with spirit and dedication. Teacher contracts, teacher selection processes, curriculum development, academic exams, and post-secondary education requirements anchor much of the traditional curriculum in place. However, fine arts courses at Langley are now required subjects, not electives. This concept expands the notion of what counts as intellectual, as serious. It opens up the curriculum to the interests — indeed passions — of a wider range of students, as well as educating them to be discerning producers and consumers of the arts.

Concluding Comments: Knowledge for All

The politics of knowledge are the politics of identity and opportunity. The universities and the academic subjects have dominated the curriculum of the secondary school because of their links with opportunity. As more groups in society clarify their own priorities, they are asking for representation and challenging the dominance of traditional academic subjects, but so far with limited success. The requirements for the academic subjects taught in university constitute the "standards" that all students must be given a chance to reach.

School curriculum policy cannot ignore the dominance of the academic as the route to opportunity. Simply adding new courses usually consigns them to second-class status. In the U.S., the debate about whether there should be a core or a smorgasbord has stimulated policy and research, but in Canada the core, at least in the schools in this study, seems intact. Few people in these schools doubt that using language well, understanding mathematics, and knowing about science and history are important for all students. Debate about core curriculum was muted in the schools we studied. Decisions were made by departments or decided by teachers individually, in the context of taken-for-granted curriculum guidelines, university entrance requirements, and provincial examinations. What actually goes on in the name of language, mathematics or science instruction was discussed less with the researchers than the dominance of those subjects. And the effect of streaming on the core subjects was barely raised.

A much broader discussion of what schools teach in the name of core subjects needs to be encouraged through public policy, experimentation, and school-based initiatives. Extending the range of what counts as "useful knowledge" depends on economic and political processes that convince educators that students really need and society really values the various kinds of work and understanding that sustain all of us as adults. It would also expand the opportunities for a large number of students who now find the way schools define academic knowledge to be irrelevant and arbitrary.

Chapter 6

Students and the Social: Caring, Motivation, and Social Learning

What I'm trying to do is create a home for them. That's what it is. It's the physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual. That's what we do. We try to create a home for them here, a safe place. (Teacher, Contact)

I worked here under Indian Affairs. It was cold....You were dealing with a bureaucracy and the feeling was totally different. It was like whatever goes on in the school, so what? But now, somebody cares. (Teacher, Peguis)

The teachers treat every student fairly, not equally but fairly....That's one of the things that makes this school successful. You have certain individuals who are willing to see to each [student's] needs. The teachers are friends and neighbours and relatives in many cases, and they like to make sure that they're doing the best job they can for our children. (Parent, Sydney)

An exemplary school to me is a place where you go and you see

> *in living colour people who actually believe and function on principles of equity...treating people with respect, respecting each other's feelings, relying on the opinion of others, valuing who people are, where they come from, what they stand for.... I mean an exemplary school is one where students are also emotionally involved.* (District principal, Corktown)

THE QUALITY OF THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT for students stands out in these case studies as the most frequently mentioned reason for a school being "exemplary." Praise for schools is often praise for the way students behave and are treated. A successful school is one that feels like a home, a place where all feel equal and safe, and where teachers care. Teachers believe that a safe and harmonious environment encourages academic success, and that personal and social skills will serve students well whatever they do in later life. In various ways, these schools try to create an environment in which students learn how to get along with others, respect authority, take responsibility, and show initiative.

As we have noted before, this informal curriculum is as important as the formal one. The relationship between formal academic teaching and informal social teaching is sometimes direct and sometimes not, sometimes in harmony and sometimes in conflict. Each school works in a different environment, faces different problems, and has different resources. In general, social demands become more formal and more pressing when students are not succeeding in their academic course work or are not motivated by the value of the credentials success brings.

The dilemma schools face is to recognize differences while treating students equitably. Co-operation and teamwork must be balanced with individual achievement, student autonomy with obedience to the rules, and encouragement of differences with social connection and equality. The schools struggle with, and engage their students in learning about, the fundamental value issues that underlie a democratic society, where productivity and competition co-exist — sometimes uneasily — with community and co-operation.

Every school has a particular culture and bases its authority for creating a social curriculum on its community's assumptions about appropriate behaviour. Schools with homogeneous clientele do this with confidence; schools with a diverse clientele work to establish a common standard that everyone will respect. Schools in communities where students experience racism and prejudice must find a basis for teaching about respect and equity. Each school must respond to its own students and communities. In small, homogeneous schools, creating a warm and personalized climate where social standards are shared seems relatively straightforward. Some alternative schools have been formed explicitly to produce this kind of environment. The large schools in Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, and Winnipeg were nominated for this study because they were able to overcome their reputations for violence, racism, and failure. In these schools, creating a respectful climate takes sustained energy, clear rules, and innovative special programs.

Size and School Climate

> *It's almost like this school is one big family because everybody knows everybody. The teachers all call you by name. They know you and they know what you're involved in. I think that helps. It makes you feel important. [In] a big school…you're just a number. Here you're somebody.* (Student, New Norway)

In every school in this study, people speak of the importance of goodwill, value teachers who are able to "relate" to students, and offer praise for responses that are caring. Metaphors of school as family abound. Teachers who go out of their way to say hello and who put in extra time to help students are often commended. For students, rituals, symbols, and shared experiences — like sweetgrass ceremonies at Joe Duquette, bagpipes and cadets at Sydney Academy, the performances and artwork in the halls at Langley Fine Arts School, the logo and pins handed out at Népisiguit, and the Christmas dinner at Contact — all symbolize and create a sense of pride in their school.

In small schools, students and teachers revel in the "human" scale of their activities, pointing to the advantages of knowing one another and the ability to be flexible. Small schools can informally negotiate and articulate a set of social standards. The common use of the "family" metaphor recognizes adult-child relationships of power and authority, as well as the attention to individual differences that characterizes families that function well.

At Pain Court, the sense of belonging to a "big family" is important to teachers and students. It is encouraged both by the small size of the school and its distinctive cultural and linguistic traditions. The teachers are "young, they understand the students and they are always available to help them."

> *I liked all my teachers...last year. I think they're nice, and friends. You can talk with them after school or in class.* (Student, Pain Court)

At Népisiguit also, the sense of pride in cultural heritage and language adds to the sense of community in the school.

> *For the past ten years Népisiguit has been effective in developing an Acadian pride, a French pride, a cultural, regional pride.* (Local resident, Bathurst)

At Hartland, the fact that the school is small and known to be a responsive environment makes a big difference to parents.

> *It's a small town. The school offers a fair amount of activities ....I know my kids tend to be involved in just about everything....They will come through the system believing that they can make an effort at things that interest them, and that chances are they will be successful. I think this kind of school, a small school, is doing wonders for their self-esteem.* (Parent, Hartland)

At Appalaches, teachers are described as caring passionately about the welfare of their students. Teachers take on what might be seen as parental roles — for example, getting a job in the cafeteria for a student who can't afford a meal. Teachers are confidants of students, and involved in helping students in every part of their lives.

> *You're not with the student just 150 minutes a year.... A girl might say to you: "I'm being assaulted at home. When I'm alone with my father, he assaults me. When I'm with my brother, he does the same thing." It makes you sick to hear that. She's sending you a message. You think about that when you're at home. You talk about it with your girlfriend. It's something important.* (Teacher, Appalaches)

> *Our school doesn't treat kids as "students," it treat them as individuals. Each one has special needs. Each one has special dreams and desires. They encourage each child to excel in whatever class the child is in. And it's because they know each one on an individual basis. They know each student.* (Parent, New Norway)

Teachers in New Norway talk about being there for students, serving students, helping students to enjoy learning, and teaching students the skills to live as caring adults. The principal marks the success of the school by a change in the attitudes of students who improve their social graces, become more self-confident, learn to "converse with people and be polite and accept responsibilities." He refers to a student who

> *was a lot harder, a lot tougher when he first came. [He had] a quick temper and [was] mad at a lot of things. The previous school gave up on him. We got him in grade 9. He's become a really nice young man, soft. We seem to be able to soften them. He's just a marvellous young man.* (Principal, New Norway)

The school prides itself on accomplishing these changes in an informal environment that includes elementary as well as secondary students.

In small rural schools, working closely with students is critical for success. The emphasis is on encouraging good citizenship and respectful relations in informal ways. The small size of these schools helps them to provide individualized education, but size is no guarantee of a cohesive, caring community, nor of an appreciation for individual differences. These schools stand out for the importance they place on these goals and their success in achieving them.

The other face of this cohesiveness is lack of diversity, which some find comforting but others boring.

> *I like it here. I've lived here all my life. I like small communities. It's peaceful. There's never really a lot of noise. There's hardly any violence. Everybody is everybody's friend, and in a small place you know everybody well enough to wave if you're driving by.* (Student, New Norway)

> *I like the friendliness. Everyone knows you. It's really nice. But the thing that isn't very good is there's never anything to do.* (Student, New Norway)

Isolation is also a danger in small, rural communities.

> *Probably ten out of 70 students who finished grade 6 at [a feeder elementary school] simply didn't even consider going to Hartland High in grade 7 because there was such a jump in social class between the town of Hartland students and [students from] some of the really poor communities that had banded together to form [the elementary school]. I think it was considered that if you finished grade 6 that was far enough, and you probably didn't have any real future at Hartland High School. Many students just didn't opt to go on. You just didn't go to town to school. It was beyond their social sense of what was possible.* (District area supervisor, Hartland)

Large urban schools include a wide variety of students and, as a result, find it more of a challenge to build caring communities for them. When teachers meet hundreds of students each day, it is difficult for them to tailor standards to individuals. Also, when standards for good behaviour are not informally shared and accepted, formality, publicity, and justification are required. When students are very different from one another, it can be both more important and more difficult for teachers to respond appropriately.

Georges Vanier's most distinctive feature is the "turnaround" of its reputation, in school safety, discipline, order, and harmony — although no one would claim the school's problems have been solved. "Caring" is a word that is frequently used at Vanier, but "family" is not. There is no single definition of success at Vanier, but parents comment on the willingness of teachers to accommodate student needs.

> *Last year we had a problem because [our son] couldn't take his career development course, which was drama, because it conflicted with math. And he was doing poorly in the advanced math. When we went to the school to discuss it, the math teacher was wonderful, just terrific. He said, "Well, you know we can put him into the general math course in my classroom" [so he could still take drama]...I was thrilled. Nobody's ever*

> *done that for him before. I feel you have to take each child as an individual, and he was able to do that.... My son is very open now. At one time if you asked him how school was, he'd give you the pat answer "fine." Now we're getting more out of him .... I think the teachers in this school are phenomenal, they really are.* (Parent, Georges Vanier)

> *I had a student on Friday who came to see me because I'd been after him for ages about his bad attendance. In the process of talking with him, he [said] that, at his last school, nobody cared when he came in or was getting into trouble for his attendance. They just talked about when his 16th birthday was so he could go. He implied to me that there's an element of caring at Vanier that he hasn't had in other places.* (Teacher, Georges Vanier)

The researchers noted the attention the teachers at Vanier devote to helping students. Many teachers arrive at school well before 8:00 a.m. for meetings and lesson preparation. They participate in lunchtime activities and do not complete their day until 4:30 p.m. Many who are involved in committee work, special projects, coaching, and other extracurricular activities extend their days into the evening.

Teachers' responsibilities go beyond relating well to students, however; they must also earn their trust.

> *I trusted this one teacher because we could talk. So one day I talked to this teacher and said that I had certain problems. Next thing I know, I'm walking down the halls [and] all the teachers in the school know. And I said, "I trusted you. I never asked you to tell the whole school." [The teacher said], "I'm trying to help you and you're not co-operating." "Why should I co-operate when I trust you and tell you something and you go around and tell the whole school and use it against me?"* (Student, Georges Vanier)

At Vancouver Technical, the themes are similar, but there is more emphasis on the school as a shared community and on creating small communities within it. Like Georges Vanier, Vancouver Technical has also experienced a turnaround in reputation and safety. The staff stresses "the importance of self-worth, leadership or citizenship, and the ability to respect and get along with people." The staff is praised because they "care about kids." At Vancouver Technical, dances, breakfasts, Hat Day, camping trips, and retreats are part of the program.

> *I like being at Tech because it's different, and also there's a togetherness between students and teachers. A lot of teachers' rooms are crowded at lunchtime, and teachers don't mind staying around and giving help.* (Student, Vancouver Technical)

The school has created a variety of small programs to respond to the needs of diverse students.

> *We are a school of many, many small, specific programs, and all of them are reacting to specific needs. I think that is evidence of the fact that the support is there for people who branch out and do things differently.* (Teacher, Vancouver Technical)

Caring about the progress of students means understanding the problems they are trying to overcome outside as well as inside the classroom. As one teacher-counsellor said, "We're not only taking care of kids; we're also helping parents in whatever ways we can — legal help, work help, housing assistance."

> *What stood out for me were the teachers and the counsellors, the principals. My [vice]-principal…went out of his way last year to get me a bus pass and he was going to get me on the lunch program…everything because I was pregnant.* (Former student, Vancouver Technical)

The importance of responding humanely and individually to students in large, diverse schools is stressed by a community worker at Vancouver Technical:

> *When you go into the students' homes and realize how they live, we should be applauding them as soon as they walk in the door at school, that they even made it. Instead of saying, "It's 8:46, and the bell went at 8:45, and you're late.. It should be "I'm so glad you made it today. Come on in, have a seat, and let's get started."*

In large, bureaucratized urban schools, responding this way is more easily said than done. When the school is surrounded by violence and poverty, it is difficult to create a personalized, safe, caring environment that encourages co-operation and identification with the school community. Alternative schools pride themselves on creating small-scale alternative social environments for students. Joe Duquette, Contact, and Corktown were created especially to counteract the environment students had experienced in large mainstream schools. While Langley Fine Arts School was established to teach an intensive fine arts curriculum, the alternative social environment it provides for students has become tremendously important to everyone associated with the school.

The rationale for Joe Duquette is established succinctly in the comments made to the researchers by its students about their previous schools. The students described inhospitable and often hostile environments where they were misunderstood, isolated, age-grade displaced, ignored in the curriculum, excluded on the playground, and taught by methods designed for non-Indian middle-class students. These experiences make them appreciate Joe Duquette.

One student said:

> *It's nice here. Calm. It's made me more peaceful. I'm not running around drinking and stuff.*

Another student explains why the school is terrific by describing her first week.

> *It's Friday and I'm going home and people are saying, "Have a nice weekend, Sue." That's real cool.*

Little things count, like students' sense that they are noticed for who they are. The fact that someone knows about them and cares makes a huge difference.

Corktown was also established to serve a group of students who were having difficulties succeeding elsewhere.

> *It provides a place for people who find the large structures in other schools get in the way of what they can achieve.... We take students that have some kind of disenchantment with the*

> *"regular" school system, [and] provide an opportunity for those students to be successful...in a smaller type of situation. I don't want to belittle our large schools...but there are clearly students for whom that setting isn't conducive to the kind of progress that they can make.* (District principal, Corktown)

Corktown's small size enhances its ability to tolerate individuality.

> *A great many students coming here...have strongly individual opinions and they insist that those [opinions] be heard and recognized. They don't necessarily insist on having their own way, but they insist on having their voices heard. Very often it's a voice that would be intolerable in other places because its a voice that is young and it is uncouth, and sometimes it can be rude. [Corktown provides] a space to let that roll by and [to wait for] the next stage to come forward.* (Teacher, Corktown)

Students at Langley also comment on the advantages of the school's small size and the individualized attention they receive:

> *I'm not just another number or name. The teachers care whether you pass or fail...*

> *Compared to the school I went to last year, I like it because it's so different. All the people are nicer and it's more of a family-like environment.*

> *At school everyone knows you by name. You walk into the office and they don't have to ask your name. They know who you are.*

Teachers and students link the acceptance of individual differences with the atmosphere of creativity and individuality fostered by the fine arts.

> *Socially, the school is seen as more accepting of differences than other schools.... I think there are, quite frankly, many students in this school who would not survive in another school, or [who] would be buried in another school, whether that's in the sense that they would be shoved to the back of the*

> *class and wouldn't utter much, or whether [they] would be teased and ostracized by their peers.* (Teacher, Langley)

Contact is another alternative school where small size and personal relations are key. Personal connections with students inform the teaching. As one teacher says, "This school runs from the heart." The researchers observed that at Contact, teachers and students address one another by their given names or by preferred nicknames. Teachers engage students in conversations, not in interrogations to resolve disputes. Disputes involving others are not brought to a conclusion until the others are consulted. Teachers speak in a modulated conversational tone and use eye contact, facial animation and gestures as part of their communication style. Conversations with students are "open" and invite students to participate. When students speak to each other, they often employ the vocabulary and phrases of the harsh and sometimes cruel environments in which they live, but those who have been at Contact the longest speak in gentler tones.

When asked what they would recommend to policy makers as vital to the success of a secondary school, students, teachers, and streetworkers at Contact almost unanimously mentioned the importance of keeping the school small.

The themes of "caring" and attention to individual needs run through accounts of why these schools succeed. Individual attention to students seems easier in small communities than in large organizations where rules must often be enforced uniformly to avoid misunderstandings and charges of unfairness. Even in large organizations, however, the ideal is negotiation and adaptation to meet the individual needs of all students.

Discipline and Teaching the Social Curriculum

Discipline is not only a question of enforcing rules but also of teaching good behaviour. The school's authority to enforce rules and the basis of its social curriculum differs from community to community, but everywhere it rests on the authority of adults over children, the consent of parents, and the necessity for conformity if students are to graduate. At some schools, there are few rules and few problems enforcing the ones there are. This social climate is a source of pride for these schools, but, although it is something they would like to take responsibility for, it is in fact characteristic of the community and reflects the school's relationship to it. In other schools, the authority of rules is more likely to be questioned. These schools must develop a consensus, a code of behaviour that will win the respect of students and parents.

Teachers at Contact express a view about discipline that is held by most teachers and parents: The trick is to prevent the problems rather than punishing students for misbehaviour or infractions of rules.

> *I think that the most effective way to deal with behaviour problems is to create an atmosphere where you don't have any. Now, that sounds like a miracle but it's not, it happens here all of the time.... [We try to] create an environment of mutual respect and as much equality as possible — not an equal relationship, but as much equality as possible. We also throw in humorous things and little stories and tell personal details of our own lives, so that students know we are just regular people.* (Teacher, Contact)

A "caring" relationship is the basis of respect between teachers and students and between students themselves. At a school that is very different from Contact, New Norway, the principal and students boast that there are no rules, that they aren't needed.

> *It's just basic, — you're nice. We can't wear hats in the classroom — that's the only rule that we seem to be having a problem with. You're supposed to respect your teachers and each other.* (Student, New Norway)

At most schools, however, rules are explicit, debated, and sometimes challenged.

At St. Benedict, the Catholic emphasis on service, personal relations, and the "ethos of caring" informs discussions about discipline. Strategies for teaching good behaviour and self-discipline are based on theological concepts and the spiritual mission of the school. The school, therefore, has an explicit stance from which to discuss appropriate rules and punishments, as well as resolve ethical dilemmas that arise in teaching students social responsibility, respect, morality, and personal problem solving. St. Benedict believes in the importance of putting students first, knowing them by name, "going the extra mile" for their needs, affirming the worth of all students, being accessible, treating them with respect, collaborating in solving their problems, and showing an interest in their lives.

> *We try to model those behaviours that we think are celebratory.... It's hard to pin down, but things like trying to have an open-door philosophy in the school, allowing kids — "people" — to come in when they feel they need to.... We send thank you notes and pat people on the back. And we try to be active listeners.* (Principal, St. Benedict)

> *Often I don't even worry about the work. I'll just ask "How are you doing? How are things going?" just to break the ice a bit so that we can talk to one another as people.* (Teacher, St. Benedict)

Detentions are the most common form of discipline for simple infractions like being late, being out of uniform, or smoking, or for more complex problems like misbehaving in class. Detentions are often combined with community-service obligations.

The researcher observed the following incident one morning in the principal's office, between the principal and a student who had skipped her detention the previous day. The student explained that she could take detentions at lunch but not after school or in the morning because of her bus connections. She explained that she did not live at home, and was holding down two jobs so that she could afford to come to school. The principal suggested student welfare, but the student opposed this course of action. They discussed her marks and her career plans, and explored what she might do to ensure she graduated that year. The principal suggested that she consult the guidance department and he helped her devise an action plan. The conversation ended with an agreement that she would serve two detentions at lunchtime in place of the one she missed, and that she would help in the office as part of her detention.

At Joe Duquette, school rules are based on Catholicism and Native traditions. Respect is practised in ritual ways and its meaning is discussed in classes. Discipline is based on a "code of ethics" that is rooted in a Native way of life, and that promises healing as well as social and academic achievement.

> *After [they are] here several months, we see such a complete change in these kids. They start to feel good about themselves and they want to learn more. They want to learn how to dance, to be a drummer, a singer. They want more information on what it is to be an Indian. They have a better vision.* (Parent council member, Joe Duquette)

Joe Duquette also teaches students to be independent, a goal shared by many of these schools. Here, the lesson is anchored in Indian tradition.

> *As Indian people, we always look on the child as a young adult. We weren't called children — I don't know where that concept came from. We were young adults, and we were treated as young adults capable of making decisions. Our parents would allow us the benefit of making a choice of path to follow. If we wanted to try out a certain path, we were allowed to follow that path. When it became a situation that was dangerous for us, then the parents would intervene. We were given a lot of choice .... And that's the type of thing we want to introduce in here. We want to respect these young people's minds, allow them to decide for themselves* (Parent council member, Joe Duquette).

At Peguis, discipline is a community concern. Parents are called upon for support and they usually respond. The school has invited community members to attend a workshop on violence.

> *It is true that children of all ages who attend Peguis school are rough and treat each other very disrespectfully at times. I do not want to discourage parents by giving the message that the school is not a safe place to be. I want it known that we do need a change in behaviour and we do need parents to be aware that the potential is there for violence.... We should not wait until someone is hurt badly or a life is lost because we have not been open and honest with each other.* (Newsletter to parents and community members, Peguis)

Centennial used to have a lot of serious discipline problems.

> *There were lots of drugs, a lot of vandalism. It was absolutely*

> *out of control. Discipline was terrible. Teachers were being assaulted, cars damaged, homes damaged. It was a terrible situation.* (Former administrator, Centennial)

Starting in the 1970s, a series of principals, with the support of parents and the board, laid down the law.

> *In the first assembly I held, I was told by teachers and administration that I should not hold an assembly because [the students] would drive us out. I said "No, we have to communicate with students." There were over 500 students. It was very, very noisy, and I was a bit apprehensive. I took the microphone...and I addressed them as ladies and gentlemen. There was a roar of laughter.* (Former principal, Centennial)

Centennial's discipline policy, which is supported by teachers and parents, remains strict. The principal patrols the lunchroom and halls. Surveillance cameras are mounted in the halls. There are rules against baseball caps, torn jeans, gum, and noise or litter in the halls. Saturday detentions are given for infractions. The policy is combined, however, with a lot of concern for student welfare. Every teacher takes responsibility for all the students, whether they're in that teacher's class or not.

At Georges Vanier, teachers aim to enforce discipline and control while giving students responsibility and rights. It is a fine line, and some argue that the school has pulled back from making demands on students in an attempt to get along with them.

> *It seems that in today's climate, everybody is afraid to take a stand because it may not be politically correct. The school board is terrified of the parents, the teachers are terrified of the parents. The only people who aren't terrified of anybody are the kids.* (Teacher, Georges Vanier)

As at Centennial, the principal here takes care to be seen in the halls, as a sign both of his knowledge of students and his omnipresent authority. Suspensions are handed out for violating the rules, but at this school suspended students are kept in school and taught about conflict management.

> *We have an in-school suspension program as a way of getting*

> *students to improve behaviour. I like to see discipline as a "consequence" not as a punishment, and to me a consequence involves punishment and rehabilitation.* (Vice-principal, Georges Vanier)

Last year, of the 74 students suspended, 49 received in-school suspensions.

> *When I was suspended once before for three days, it was really, really hard to catch up when I came back. But [here] when I got an in-school suspension, when I came back to the classroom three days later, I was right where the rest of the class was. So it's better.* (Student, Georges Vanier)

Vanier makes extensive use of support services such as a conflict resolution teacher and school social workers.

> *Images of the school in the public weren't flattering, and the multi-ethnic population that moved into the area scared a lot of people. There was a lot of fear about what would be happening to the school, so right away we started to be proactive in developing support systems for students such as the Learning Centre. A lot of social workers come into the school and work with...conflict management people. We did this to stick our finger in the dike before anything really bad happened.... [Now] we have here virtually no violence. There isn't an undercurrent like you feel in other schools, of some insidious evil, some threat.* (Teacher, Georges Vanier)

Conflict management programs are also part of the school curriculum at Hartland and Kildonan. Hartland is one of two pilot schools in its district that uses such a program. The guidance counsellor had three sessions with each grade 8 class and then trained eight students as peer mediators. She estimates that the program has reduced the incidence of conflict and fighting in the school by at least 50 per cent. At Kildonan, a conflict resolution initiative, supported by the Walter and Duncan Gordon Charitable Foundation, consists of two components: prevention (helping students and staff understand the nature of conflict) and response (developing a mediation program). Students are trained as peer mediators.

Les Etchemins experiences few problems with discipline, but gangs and drugs are issues in the community. The visibility of the administration is one method of control.

> *That's why I'm always walking the halls and talking with students, greeting them. It's a monitoring role, a form of discipline. It's as important for the administration to have a visible presence in the school as for parents to be visible in the home. It's when parents are not at home that children get into trouble. It's the same thing at school.* (Vice-principal, Les Etchemins)

The handling of discipline at this school reflects the divisions between the academic responsibilities put first by teachers and the more extensive responsibilities the school as a whole has for the student. In general, teachers handle discipline in their classes themselves, but they will expel students from class if they are disruptive. Sending a student to the office can call into question a teacher's professional competence. Some teachers worry that the administration too often supports the student against the teacher.

> *The role of a vice-principal is, in the first place, to come to the support of the teachers. He should support the teacher before supporting the students. If a teacher is sick or unable to function, the vice-principal who works a lot to support the students is wasting his time. First he should support the teacher, then the students — and everything will go well. The vice-principals who have understood this are few and far between. I'm still waiting.* (Teacher, Les Etchemins)

Students sometimes see the administration as supportive, sometimes as defending the teachers. Getting agreement on what will and will not be acceptable behaviour is not a simple matter. The rights of students and the authority of teachers can conflict.

At Les Etchemins, parents are seen to be important for discipline. If parenting is inadequate, the school is forced to take on parental responsibilities. Inadequate parenting is attributed to unemployment, single-parent families, parents who "are not much better than their children," who look for easy solutions, and who avoid the "inconveniences" of discipline.

> *Nowadays we have to make up for the deficiencies of the family. Students find at school what's missing in their family life and social environment: we listen, take an interest in them, show them respect, provide supervision, and, especially, a presence.* (Administrator, Les Etchemins)

> *The school has no choice but to meet the students' needs because its mission is to educate and, in order to educate, certain conditions must exist. If these conditions do not exist in the home, the school must reinvent them.* (Vice-principal, Les Etchemins)

At Népisiguit, the key to discipline is a consensus forged by the staff and enforced by the vice-principal that students should take responsibility for their own behaviour.

> *His discipline is not really authoritarian.....He makes it clear that he's not angry with the student but that the student is responsible for the behaviour in which he or she has engaged and must suffer the consequences. He listens to the students and gives them an opportunity to express themselves, which is very important in their eyes. In this way he maintains a good relationship with them.* (Teacher, Népisiguit)

Students learn about social responsibility from school rules and disciplinary codes, from formal and informal interaction with teachers and administrators, and occasionally from school programs. Parents and the wider community are involved too. In some schools, rules are minimal and easily agreed to — no violence, no littering, getting to class on time. In other schools, the rules are easily agreed to but harder to define — respect, responsibility, co-operation. And in yet other schools, agreements about rules are harder to negotiate because of the diversity of the community or because the meaning of co-operation or respect is unclear. Then codes must be carefully worked out, debated, and taught, a process which can in itself educate students, staff, and perhaps the larger community.

Responding to Cultural and Racial Difference

Differences in culture and race are often linked to differences in opportunities and power, for Canada is not just a mosaic of cultures, but, as John Porter (1965) put it, a "vertical mosaic." Debates about multiculturalism, antiracism programs, and assimilation-versus-diversity take place in schools, just as they do on editorial pages and in legislatures. Schools can respond to these issues by trying to treat all students alike, or by articulating and responding to the differences and difficulties that emerge. They can treat these issues as remote from the formal curriculum, or integral to it.

In schools where there is a good deal of similarity and agreement among students, school rules can be straightforward. Respect, kindness, self-discipline, and co-operation are understood similarly. In more diverse communities, agreements about rules are harder to forge and what constitutes acceptable behaviour can be contentious. The line between flexibility (treating people differently because they are different) and discrimination (treating people differently because of the group they belong to) is not always clear. An active teaching process is required to encourage an understanding of differences while also ensuring fairness.

Schools where cultural and linguistic diversity is minor find it relatively easy to ignore the need for intercultural understanding. The fact that the principal at Hartland is black is simply not an issue; the only rivalries Népisiguit experiences with its neighbouring English-language school in Bathurst are sports rivalries; and a nearby Native reserve appears to go unnoticed by students at New Norway. The silence is important, for as students leave their communities and experience a more complex world, they will encounter diversity that they may be ill-equipped to deal with, however well-meaning and tolerant they have been educated to be. The few students in these communities who experience the difficulties of being linguistically or culturally different have few outlets for expressing their experience.

Schools with diverse student populations cannot ignore cultural and linguistic issues, for they are experienced by students and teachers every day. Multi-ethnic schools struggle with these issues as much as the larger society, perhaps more so because of the close proximity and the competitive environment in which students work. At Jeanne-Mance, where there are many cultural differences among students, the school tries simply to treat everyone alike, at least in the classroom.

> *Do I see cultural differences? Yes I do. I see different allegiances at all levels, but not in my class. I see it in the halls. In my class they are all the same.* (Teacher, Jeanne-Mance)

At Sydney Academy, the approach of treating everyone alike has been challenged and it is now being changed. In 1993, a course was added to the history curriculum to explore the experiences of blacks, Mi'kmaq, Acadians, Ukrainians, Poles, Jews, Italians, Scots, and Loyalist English in the history of Cape Breton. This is the only course of its kind in Nova Scotia. As well, a Mi'kmaq literature project was introduced to teach English as a language of communication to both reserve and off-reserve Mi'kmaq. Although these formal courses provide students with a public space to talk about differences, they tend to enrol mostly minority students and they are not considered part of the high-status academic core. Minority students also get together in clubs. But change in acceptable behaviour, although now recognized as necessary, is still slow.

> *It seems that we're looked down upon sometimes. If one black does something wrong, we're all the same. I get that feeling a lot. We've started to form a black students' group. I'm the only black student in all my classes. I wish they had a black on staff, even if only a guidance counsellor and not a teacher.* (Student, Sydney)

Georges Vanier has dealt with diversity for some time. The North York Board of Education developed a race and ethnic relations policy in 1984; it has also issued a document on racial harassment policy and procedures. Part of the school's approach is to recognize and celebrate diversity. On the inside cover of Vanier's yearly student planner, the word "welcome" is printed in 26 languages. Religious holidays that are not school holidays are noted on the calendar, as well as the dates for Black History Week, Cross-cultural Harmony Week, and the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Extracurricular student organizations such as the African Heritage Association, the Chinese

Cultural Association, the Cross-Cultural Harmony Club, the Muslim Student Association, the Newcomers' Club, and the Tamil Association are listed in the planner. The distinctions among the different cultural groups is noticeable.

> *There's a very strong computer club here, and the major percentage of kids involved are the Oriental kids. Then there're groups like the basketball kids, and they're largely of African heritage, but that's changing a little bit—some other cultures are participating on the basketball teams. We want to see that. We're not really happy with any one culture dominating.* (Principal, Georges Vanier)

The teacher who acts as a liaison for the Cross Cultural Harmony Club commented:

> *The student council is...very multicultural; it...seems to have been successful in breaking down some of the cross-cultural barriers.... But there are a number of other groups where students tend to stick together based on culture and language primarily, and the students in my classes will tell me that. I see friendships on an individual basis among students of different cultures and backgrounds—quite close friendships, but we've had discussions about this and students say, "Yes, Miss, but when push comes to shove I go with my own group."...I ran a cross-cultural organization for a couple of years and I took a group of students away to promote cross-cultural harmony. It was easy for the group when you're away to cross those barriers, but when they come back into the school environment there's still a lot of separation.* (Teacher, Georges Vanier)

Even though there is a cross-over between groups, some students seem to need the comfort of a shared language and shared customs.

> *I know a teacher who is of my culture. I'm Sikh. He's Sikh, and I feel free to go and talk to him about any problems, more than other teachers of different cultures. So that's good....In our culture, girls aren't allowed to do as much as boys. We aren't allowed to go out and we have arranged marriages. I have*

> *friends from different cultures and when they say, "Let's go out," and I say I can't, they don't understand. But friends of my own culture do .... One of the best things is just being able to talk to somebody in your own language.* (Student, Georges Vanier)

Many teachers make conscious efforts to help students get to know others from different cultures, to recognize and understand differences.

> *My adult students come from all over the globe, and I mix them up all the time. One of the rules I have is that we have to speak English at all times. Part of my purpose in doing this is so they will get to know each other and debunk stereotypes. To me, racism is an indication that people don't know each other, and whenever you see a bias against a group, if you ask students if they know anyone from that group, the answer is usually "no."* (Teacher, Georges Vanier)

> *I think one compensation for the literacy problems in our classrooms is the richness in an international classroom. This [diversity] leads to greater understanding of other cultures, and respect for each other, curiosity about the rest of the world, and a recognition of a variety of religions.* (Teacher, Georges Vanier)

Cultural differences, however, may also be linked to status and power. Although harassment and racism are always of concern, teachers at Georges Vanier maintain that such incidents are not common at the school. Racism is actively discussed to prevent racial tension. The school must challenge as well as reflect the community in order to do its work effectively. A black school-and-community advisor at Vanier explains how a charge of racism can undermine the legitimacy of everything the school does.

> *I have found students who year after year have the same difficulties — they can't deal with the classroom, they don't have the skills, they are embarrassed, they don't want you to know that they're failing — and it all comes out in their behaviour. They're verbally abusive to teachers and principals, they fight at the drop of a hat, and they beat up other kids.*

> *[When you talk to them], they bring on board racism. The black kids especially say: "This school is racist. They don't care if we fail. We don't get a fair shake. The system is not for blacks" — you know, all those negative things. Some of the kids were buying into this, and parents were buying into it and complaining. The kids tell them at home, "I got suspended because I'm black." So we tell parents, "That's not it. It's not a racial thing. Your kid is a pain and he's not conducting himself properly."*

At Vancouver Technical, teachers also discuss racism and cultural differences in classrooms and try to ensure that relations between teachers and students are perceived as fair. The school tries to recognize and encourage pride in cultural differences, while battling negative stereotypes of those differences. In a student survey, 80 per cent of students felt satisfied that "teachers show respect and appreciation for cultural differences in students," while only 67 per cent agreed that "students appreciate the different cultures and values of their fellow students." Students described racism as racial stereotyping and slurs. Just over half thought racism is not a problem at Vancouver Technical, and those who did think it was a problem attributed it to just a few of their fellow students:

> *If they don't like the person, they'll just make fun of their culture — like if someone can't like play a sport, sometimes people say, if you're Chinese, "Chinese people can't play basketball."*
>
> *"Chinese are bad drivers." You know, all the stereotypes: "East Indian people stink," "Italian people are stubborn," "Whites are racist." I think it's all junk! I don't believe in that. I don't buy that at all.* (Student, Vancouver Technical)

Many teachers attribute this individual racism to ignorance and intolerance. They try to provide an education that encourages an understanding of cultural differences and also challenges the prevailing biases of students.

At Centennial, too, discussions of racism and cultural differences are open and frequent. The principal, himself black, is well aware of the issues. An effort has been made to hire staff who represent the same cultural and ethnic mix as the students. Moral and religious education classes teach respect for cultural differences. Cultural awareness days are celebrated.

> *The last time we took a poll, 40 different nations were represented. [There is] harmony. It's not just a tolerance. I hate that word "tolerance." I think our students and our staff and our parents have a respect and acceptance for whatever..... Respect is, I guess, the biggest thing that's good about Centennial.* (Teacher, Centennial)
>
> Students note the effects:
>
> *If there's a racial comment, wooh! And if someone overhears you, a teacher or someone, you'll get it.*
>
> *Some of the kids here probably come from families where there's racism. And yet, when they walk into this school, you don't see that. You don't see the Greeks with the Greeks and the Orientals with the Orientals.*

At Contact, students must agree to a code of student behaviour that prohibits racist, sexist, and homophobic remarks. The school's curriculum includes black literature, lesbian and gay fiction and film, women's studies, and Native studies. Special days are dedicated to the discussion of ways to recognize, combat, and eliminate racism, sexism, and homophobia. Excerpts from a report of the school's Remembrance Day ceremony give a clear idea of this school's culture and how it differs from other schools in our study:

> *The remembering began with a tribute to Bobby Sands, the Irish political martyr...*
> *George, a streetworker strikingly dressed in a shabby and tattered red military-style jacket, worn casually open, remembered Joe Hill and all who had suffered...to improve the lives of the oppressed in society....*
> *A black student remembered Martin Luther King and read from Zinn's* People's History of the United States.
> *A female Native student remembered the Indian movements....*
> *A student read his own poem, "We are dumb," decrying war....*

> *The ceremony concluded with Michael's reminding the community of those whom Amnesty International is trying to help and the lighting of a white kitchen candle encircled by a coil of barbed wire — the Amnesty Candle.*

This commitment to social issues and inclusivity gives the school a very particular reputation.

> *People joke that if you're not a lefty, you can't come to this school This is the only [school] I know that is this political where I can take gay and lesbian literature and black studies in history.* (Student, Contact)

The warrant for the school's approach is an agreement among the teachers, the school board, and students.

> *Even though we don't all share the same politics, we still see education for this group of people, marginalized for the most part, as a political act, something that challenges what has been their experience and the mainstream notion of education.* (Co-ordinator, Contact)

A trustee links Contact's political stance to the larger politics of the city:

> *Toronto is an interesting laboratory for a whole lot of social change around organization and how people interact with one another and how a democracy functions. The school system has to be part of that, and children have to learn those things.*

Effective discipline requires the development of a climate where the rules and social assumptions of the school are respected by students. It requires agreement from diverse groups, agreement that recognizes differences among students within a framework of equality and fairness. If these differences are not recognized by the school, its attempts to teach both the formal and the informal curriculum may be undermined. Each school needs a strong ethical base from which to educate, even if that base is not always shared by all students and parents. In a society that is committed to equality and fair treatment, the school must explore with students what this ethos means for day-to-day interaction.

Gender

Although a wider range of opportunities are available for young women today than in the past, gender equity has not yet been achieved. Schools, both formally and informally, teach lessons about gender roles and the appropriate relations between men and women. Differences between male and female students are observable everywhere in schools. Gender makes a difference in students' informal relations in the cafeteria, the halls, and the school yard. It makes a difference to course enrolments, career expectations, and patterns of achievement. Messages about gender are still mixed, and the role of the school in transmitting these messages reflects this.

Discussion of gender is not common in the schools in this study. At Vancouver Technical, for example, the researchers found that almost everyone they spoke with expected to be asked about the school's cultural and linguistic diversity, but the topic of gender took them by surprise.

> *Within the school itself, I can't think of anything that is being done to promote gender equity system-wide. Within classes, certainly among teachers I have talked to, there is pretty strong support for gender equity.* (Teacher, Vancouver Technical)

Perhaps the clearest way of seeing persistent gender differences is to look at enrolment patterns. At Peguis and at Hartland, more girls stay in school through the senior grades. At Népisiguit, the percentage of girls increases gradually from 50.5 per cent in grade 10 to 51.5 per cent in grade 12. At Appalaches, there are also more girls in the advanced courses. Langley attracts far more females than males, as does Pain Court, especially at advanced levels. The overall patterns suggest that girls are doing well in academic courses. In sciences and technology, however, girls are under-represented. At Georges Vanier, which has been particularly innovative in high technology, a vice-principal commented:

> *If you ask whether gender equity is an issue at Vanier, you get a different answer depending on who you talk to. In my opinion, it is. But I know that other members of the admin team would not necessarily agree with me. But the sports in*

> *the school are very much focused on the boys. We are a school that prides itself on computer programs and technical programs, but I don't see female students participating in the numbers that I would like. I don't think it's as bad in science and math now, partly because we have some female staff members in those areas.*

Georges Vanier, like other schools, supports more equal representation of male and female students in courses, but does not keep statistics that would monitor male/female enrolment patterns. At Kildonan, there has been an increase in female enrolment in math and science, and a woman is head of the mathematics department, but few girls are enrolled in carpentry and few boys in cosmetology. When a female vocational student won an award, the school newspaper published an article about her that concluded "...Carla encourages girls to enter the field of electrical-electronics because of the many employment opportunities available."

Creating a school climate that encourages equal treatment is difficult, and is not often attempted. Sydney has a student body that is two-thirds male, and a staff of 59, at least 50 of whom are men, three senior administrators, all of whom are men, and two full-time guidance counsellors who are men. One woman guidance counsellor serves the school on a half-time basis.

> *The academy has always been male-oriented. The men have run and looked after everything. I think most of the department heads are men. Certainly all of the administration are men. So that's the model the students are looking at. They think it must be the right one, [because] it's all that they see.* (Former teacher, Sydney)

Sydney's male orientation is in contrast to Holy Angels High, once a private Catholic school for girls, but now a public school under the same board as Sydney.

> *Holy Angels is coping with a lot of the problems. Oftentimes it feels as if they get [those students for whom] Sydney does not have a place. They'll bend over backwards to cope with them. They get a lot of the kids who are in difficulty — Native girls, girls who get pregnant, single mothers, older girls returning to school, poorer students. Their whole approach is very student- and problem-centred.* (Teacher, Sydney)

A climate of equality requires a school code that identifies gender as an issue and attempts to deal with it. There are few schools in this study where this happens. At Centennial, there has been little school discussion of gender issues, although there have been complaints that male students are harassing female students. Attempts at promoting equality among cultural groups have sensitized the staff to the gender issues, and they intend to add gender to the school's agenda. Many department heads are female. The school is concerned that allowance be made for differences between cultural traditions and gender expectations.

> *The girl who spoke [at a public speaking contest] came fully veiled. [That was] her concept of gender — she came in full veil to speak at a public meeting. And she was very comfortable with who she is, a young Muslim veiled woman. I think she is comfortable with her ability.... She had not always attended school wearing the veil, but it was something very valued inside [her] and the school gave her the strength to be completely who she is.* (School board consultant, Centennial)

The celebration of differences can be a problem if it leads to inequality or fails to create understanding between groups. A teacher at Georges Vanier notes how hard it is to mix male and female students in her class:

> *Even within my own classroom, the women hang around together. Yesterday we had seven tables, and the women were at two of them, and the men at the other ones. I walked in and said: "Talk about segregation. What's going on here? Come on, let's mix it up!" And they said, "No, no, we're comfortable like this."*

The vice-principal raised the issue of sexual harassment:

> *I think some girls feel that they have to accept behaviour from the boys — too much touching, some of it abusive — I tell them, "No, you don't." I don't think it's any different here from any place else. I just think it's still a major problem. It's societal. I don't think female students are seeing themselves as capable people who can go out and make a life for themselves; they're still seeing themselves according to the needs of some guys.*

At Langley Fine Arts, the acceptance of individuality, creativity, and personal expression, as well as the predominance of girls, seems to translate into a climate of greater gender equity.

> *The girls are much less inhibited about being more demanding and seeking excellence for themselves here than when I taught at [another school] where I found, as a general rule, the guys were more intent on pursuing the sciences and making sure they got excellent grades and that sort of thing. Here, the girls are every bit as assertive—demanding excellence and achieving it. They really do well. They have excellent study habits. They are very disciplined.* (Teacher, Langley)

> *[In my old school], if you're a male drama student, you're gay. Or if you're a female drama student, you're some new age, psycho weirdo, who's just into, like, inner beings or whatever, and you're a geek or a nerd or something.* (Student, Langley)

The problems of teen moms have been addressed with special programs at Qitiqliq, Balfour, and Joe Duquette. The program at Balfour, which is the result of strong advocacy by concerned social workers, counsels and teaches young women who are pregnant or new parents. It is separated from the rest of the school, providing a safe haven but unable to challenge the stereotypes that abound. Few of the young fathers appear.

In Arviat, half the population is under 18 and a sizeable proportion of these young people are teenage mothers. Shared Care is a local initiative, originally a second-chance pilot project for drop-outs and returning students.

> *Shared Care made it possible for me to come back to school [after] two years. There are two workers there and 15 kids in Shared Care. I have two boys in Shared Care. My little one is happy there and my older one wants to go there all the time ...that's all he talks about. People are very nice there. And I love my grade 12 courses...My husband supports me when I have to do my homework....I want to be a social worker so I can help my people.* (Student, Qitiqliq)

This program, which is for students at Arctic College as well as Qitiqliq, was originally conceived as a way to provide babysitting services for young mothers while they went back to school. But it has also become a teaching opportunity for the school and an opportunity to support students who are serious about their education. As part of the career and life management course, all returning students with children share the babysitting duties in the Shared Care program. This responsibility gives them valuable experience in organizing and delivering programs to pre-school children.

As with other controversial matters, the schools in the study vary in their approach to gender issues. In many school communities, gender is not an issue, though a gradual move towards equal enrolment in courses is welcomed as progress. A few schools explicitly address issues of gender, sexual harassment, and sexuality. They try to make schools safer for students who are exploring the meaning of masculinity and femininity and encourage them to learn how gender affects people.

Extracurricular Activities and Student Life

Extracurricular activities are an important way to teach students about social responsibility, discipline, and co-operation. Parents cite the dedication of staff involved in extracurricular activities as sign of an exemplary school. In most schools, these activities are carried out by teachers on top of their regular teaching duties; they are optional for staff as well as students. At some schools, however, the centrality of the extracurricular programs is recognized by hiring non-teaching staff to run them. The budget allocated for these activities varies significantly from school to school. In most schools the extracurricular programs emphasize sports and give particular attention to male teams, but some schools have extended the range of activities substantially.

Balfour offers a variety of team and individual programs — sports, drama, debating, band, vocal jazz, improvisation club, and other choral programs, as well as an annual musical and fashion show.

> *There is an opportunity for each student to get involved in something different and be part of this school. I think each student that comes here can find a spot to plug into.* (Teacher, Balfour)

One teacher notes the pedagogical advantages in becoming involved with extracurricular activities:

> *I think students can relate to a teacher as a role model, especially with extracurricular events. They get to see the teacher in a different light, You are not so much the disciplinarian or the person who is trying to [get them to] work, work, work in the classroom.* (Teacher, Balfour)

The school's extracurricular accomplishments are a source of great pride.

> *We have one of the best weight rooms in the city. We have one of the best football teams in the city. We have the best wrestling team in the city. We have one of the best vocal jazz groups in the city. And our musicals are just excellent and the programs that we put on are all for the students, and the students are what make them happen.* (Student, Balfour)

At New Norway, the extracurricular program helps teachers get to know students, encourages social and leadership skills, and promotes a positive atmosphere. Sydney prides itself on its extensive extracurricular program, designed to "develop sportsmanship and healthy competition among students, facilitate communication, and allow students to achieve in areas other than academics." A proud hockey tradition "makes men" of the boys, and a wide range of activities — including a model United Nations, an invitational Latin tournament, a literacy club, sports teams of many kinds, debating, and arts activities — make the school well known in its community as a good place for students.

At Grandy's River, the extracurricular program is considered an integral activity for both teachers and students, because it keeps students in school.

> *I think this sports thing is helping some of the students, because some of the students that are on the teams probably are not strong academically. But they never want to say, "Mom, I'm leaving school," because they're finding that if they're good at sports, they've got this accomplishment, and they are successful in that way. So it's keeping them there.* (Parent, Grandy's River)

The school aims to have 100 per cent of the students participate in some form of extracurricular activity, although staff acknowledge that they haven't yet reached that goal. More boys are involved than girls. The teachers' handbook lists the following activities: volleyball, softball, badminton, tennis, weightlifting, basketball, croquet, bocce, canoeing, cross-country skiing, shuffleboard, student council, yearbook committee, girls' club (for crafts), archery, chess/scrabble, drama.

> *The school's main goal in this vital area is to have all students involved in some activity. We believe intramural sports to be more important for the student body than provincial sports teams — hence, our time and effort should reflect this bias. It is extremely important that ALL teachers have some role in this area — if not, they are being "carried" by those who are giving of their time voluntarily.* (Teachers' handbook, Grandy's River)

"La vie étudiante," student life, is the name given to extracurricular activities in Quebec schools. The main curriculum is quite academic and similar for all students, but the extracurricular program allows plenty of opportunity for self-expression and different kinds of talents. It motivates students to stay in school, it provides a point of pride in the school, and it constitutes an opportunity for students to get together and have fun. At Les Etchemins, the student-life program is credited with changing the school's reputation and allowing it to be nominated as exemplary. It is organized by extracurricular activities directors with the co-operation of teachers and involves theatre, sports, and elaborate dances.

> *The activities allow students who are so inclined to go a little beyond the academic side of school life; the school becomes a place where they can develop special talents that will serve them for the rest of their lives.* (Parent, Les Etchemins)

Eighty-two schools in Quebec have caisses populaires — credit unions. The idea started 11 years ago, and now 12,000 students are members of these student credit unions, which control capital of two million dollars. Student credit unions encourage students to save their money and teach them about money management and entrepreneurship. They also offer students a higher rate of interest than other local credit unions.

The credit union at Appalaches has been in operation for five years, and a quarter of the students are members. The student executive decides on rates of interest and how the caisse will operate. The students in charge are chosen on the basis of good academic results, punctuality, sociability, discretion, and presentation skills.

> *I learned all the basics of administration. We had courses on how to manage a board, how to direct a co-op, and everything. We had help from the Sainte-Justine Caisse populaire.* (Student president, Appalaches)

At Népisiguit, the student-life program is similar to that in Quebec schools. Six hundred of the 1,300 students are active in the program. Some of the money that sustains it comes from the cafeteria, operated by a parent group with student representatives. Funding also comes from community activities and partnerships. Student life is seen as central to the school, transmitting "a culture of involvement." The researchers noted the high level of student participation in sports activities and variety shows. Some senior female students attach great importance to being involved. "The young people who are not happy at school," one student said, "are those who do not participate in student life." Teachers also stress the importance of supporting students in getting involved.

Although these are "extracurricular" programs, their goals are central to the schools' missions. They are designed to motivate students and develop talents that are important but not adequately addressed in the formal curriculum. However, sometimes they take so much time and energy that they are seen to detract from homework. Many schools, however, use extracurricular activities to teach the social values the community cherishes.

Student Politics and Student Power

Much of the talk about teaching students responsibility and citizenship actually means students learning what adults have to say and obeying their rules. Secondary schools are places where adults have authority over students. Attendance laws make it clear that students are not considered responsible adults who can make their own decisions. Actively teaching citizenship would require schools to give students responsibility for participating in the governance of some school activities. Little of this was evident in most of the schools in the study.

At Peguis, the researchers observed that one of the most noticeable features of student life is its separateness from adult culture. Students interact primarily with each other, with "teachers on one side of the line and students on the other." The formality of dress and conduct, the ever-present rules, and the infrequency with which students are seriously consulted on matters of concern further emphasize the differences between the "children" and the adults. In fact, the researchers found that, in general, even in these "exemplary" schools, adults are in control, and students are recipients of rather than active agents in their education.

The student community is difficult for an adult to penetrate without long study. Researchers find that adult perceptions of students are easier to document than the perceptions of students themselves. But these adult perceptions may be untrustworthy, because adults in schools are caught up in their work — teaching lessons, marking papers, attending committee meetings — and so they do not find time to sit down with students to simply talk.

Student councils exist in virtually all these schools, but most occupy themselves with social arrangements, dances, athletic events, special projects, and, sometimes, fund raising for the school.

Kildonan established a Student Bill of Rights and Responsibilities in 1989, which delineates students' rights to an education, to democratic representation (a voice in school affairs), and to freedom of expression and rights of appeal, as well as school procedures concerning student files, evaluation policies, and breach of school rules. The recognition of student rights contributes to a climate of mutual respect between students and staff.

> *I find that Kildonan East teachers treat the students as though they are older, not like children. It's hard to believe it but I am actually enjoying Kildonan East....There is such a happy atmosphere. I think this is what is making me succeed this year.* (Student, Kildonan))

Student government is well-developed only in a few schools. At Sydney, students learn organizational skills and responsibility through student organizations that are fairly autonomous.

> *Students have a say in our student life and the programs, from*

> *sports to academics to debating. It's very unusual to have that. I think that makes the academy a success.* (Student, Sydney)

At Népisiguit, students have their own budget and space, and they have a considerable amount of influence. The student council is formally structured and has a large annual budget. The executive council has eight members and an adult monitor, and the advisory council has 57 members. The Népisiguit student council is consulted by other student councils across New Brunswick. It has also initiated several projects of importance in the school.

> *Each year the student council tries to do something innovative, to bring something new into the school. Last year, it was TV sets and this year the students want to have a pit barbecue. I'm always telling them not to be afraid to take risks and try something new. I often use a bicycle analogy with young people, telling them that if they stop pedalling as they go up a hill, they're going to start rolling backwards.* (Vice-principal, Népisiguit)

Students here are involved in organizing student activities. The student council started peer counselling, organized seminars and national and international exchanges, and was part of an educational television program on student councils. However, its involvement in advising teachers, principals, and parents is minimal. It is this wider role that students in Toronto have been seeking.

The Toronto Association of Student Councils and its Student Affairs Committee asserted in their joint report in December 1993 to Ontario's Royal Commission on Learning that:

> *Students must have official and recognized voices in the operation of their schools, communities, and boards of education. Students have no opportunity to propose curriculum changes, regardless of how irrelevant they find existing curricula or of how valid their suggestions might be. This has resulted in overwhelming alienation of students from the governing bodies of the education system, and the alienation of these bodies from the realities of student lives and needs. Without profound changes to these conditions it will not be possible to establish a system which is at all capable of meeting*

> *the need and demand of students for relevant, appropriate and stimulating programmes.*

The curriculum superintendent with responsibility for Toronto's alternative schools believes that students who value learning feel they have a stake in the school, and that such students are "the most credible advocates of their schools." The alternative schools in the Toronto Board of Education encourage students to become active players rather than "performing spectators." At Contact, students participate in making and enforcing the rules. Teachers there feel that giving students a voice facilitates teaching and helps to instil the attitudes required for citizenship in a democratic society.

> *You could teach all of this theoretical stuff from books about politics and about voting and about how many people sit in the parliament and how you get to be a cabinet minister and all of that stuff. That means nothing. It's all just theoretical, abstract crap that has nothing to do with people's lives. You know, you vote every four years and big deal, because nothing changes. That is the hidden message that kids get from school: You are powerless, you remain powerless, so don't even bother trying to change things.* (Teacher, Contact)

Giving students a voice also improves the social climate of the school.

> *Teachers don't have to act as police. And when we do have to intervene — this is really important — when I ask a student to leave, the other students back me up. The other students aren't siding with that student, they are siding with you.* (Teacher, Contact)

Students are close observers of schools. They have a great deal at stake and they often have strong opinions. They are learning to take responsibility, to work collectively. Many schools could benefit from the kinds of active student involvement in schools like Contact and Népisiguit, even though it is demanding and complex and may threaten some adults.

Programs for Students at Risk

Provisions for students at risk were a key focus of this research study. The literature on early school-leaving points to the importance of "communities of support" for keeping students involved in and attached to the school (Wehlage *et al.*, 1989; Gilbert *et al., 1993*). Students who see the opportunities promised by schooling as tangible and possible are more likely to conform to social expectations. Others need to be motivated; they are not sure school is worth it. Schools pay particular attention to these students because they are the ones who constitute the discipline problems and question the utility of schooling.

The premise of this study — and the reason we chose to report on schools, not on specific programs for students at risk — is that the organization of the school as a whole is the key to keeping students enrolled and engaged. Adding programs onto the curriculum to respond to specific needs can be important, but the vitality of these programs, their marginalization or importance, their resources and enrolments, depend on the context of the school.

Programs that support and encourage students at risk abound in these schools, although they take different forms. They offer remedial academic support intertwined with social support. They are designed to motivate students, to give them a sense of belonging, to encourage positive social behaviour. They are especially common in the earlier grades and in alternative programs in the large schools. Although schools use these programs to include students and to recognize their particular needs, they can also exclude and marginalize. The dilemma, in the language of the day, is whether to "mainstream" students at-risk or create special programs for them.

St. Benedict operates as an inclusive community. The school does not believe you deal with students at risk with "a program," but with a sense of community and belonging that transcends any particular program. Most special education at St. Benedict does not take students out of class for long, as part of the school's philosophy is that students should work together, whatever their abilities and talents. There is, however, a breakfast club, initiated by a youth care worker and teachers who were concerned that some students' performance and behaviours were affected by coming to school without a decent breakfast because of financial difficulties at home. But this service does not take them out of the classroom: twice weekly, teachers, assisted by student volunteers, prepare a breakfast for needy students in the family studies classroom. Expenses are covered by the student council.

Students at risk academically or behaviourally at St. Benedict become the focus of "action plans." Action plans are part of an intervention process that involves staff and school resources (administrators, guidance counsellors, in-school team meetings, and regular meetings about special grade 9 groupings called "villages"). In situations requiring major academic, psycho-social, or disciplinary interventions, parents are consulted in developing the plan. Action plans are a formal agreement or contract between the staff, student, and in some cases parents, on the nature of the problem, the steps to be taken to resolve it, and the consequences of student non-compliance.

At Peguis, remedial education prompted a debate about in-class versus out-of-class help. Helping students one-on-one required that they miss regular class time for tutoring.

> *The students would always be in a catch-up phase ...I felt I was just burdening the students. Students felt stigmatized by being called out of the room for the needed extra help. Instead of abandoning the system, we changed it.* (Resource teacher, Peguis)

The principal points with pride to the fact that there are now three resource rooms in the school where students can turn for extra help when it is needed. The help is mostly academic and it is individualized.

At Grandy's River, one full-time resource teacher works with students who have the most serious learning problems. Individual program plans are developed for 15 students at the school. The resource teacher must work closely with teachers, as all special-needs students are now integrated into the regular classrooms and are only withdrawn for extra help when necessary.

Appalaches has had particular success with retaining students and helping them perform well on provincial examinations, despite its relatively low socio-economic status and the educational attainment of the parents in the community. Appalaches, the researchers found, helps all students in regular classes; all teachers are tutors. At the start of the year, each teacher is assigned a certain number of students to tutor. An effort is made to assign in a fair and equitable manner both the good students and those having problems. Because these teacher-tutors are advised and supported by their team colleagues, they can intervene more effectively when a student is having difficulties. What's special here is the importance given to the human side of the relationship that the tutor establishes with the student, a relationship based on help.

However, there are several measures for preventing students from dropping out, organized by two specialists. These programs include a program for a group of unmotivated boys who were often absent, that involves rebuilding an automobile, a "comité des coeurs brisés" [committee for broken hearts] for students having problems with their love relationships; a motivation club known as School First, which provides motivation workshops for young people in the first, second, and third years of high school; peer help, where students at risk are paired with academically stronger students; and a process whereby teachers co-operate with a counsellor in placing and evaluating students.

At Hartland, teachers provide individualized help to students and seek support from parents.

> *We identify students at-risk through academic results but also through contact with teachers and their observations of students interacting with other students. We're not prepared to just let the student go. We had a student who did drop out a couple of years ago. We did a home visit. The parent wanted the student to stay in school; the student just wanted to go and work. But we intervened. There'll be nobody that just drops out of school without some contact or intervention. We don't lose very many.* (Principal, Hartland)

The school intervenes with guidance, peer tutoring, peer mediation, problem-solving teams, special resource teachers, or a special mentoring program. A half-time mentor works with eight or nine students who need specific and intensive support and monitoring. At least once during the day, the mentor meets with each student to check attendance and organization of school work, to discuss homework, to stress study skills, and to provide emotional support. Mentors also use scheduled time periods to teach study and organizational skills and visit students at home at least two times a month.

> *The mentoring program is one of the most effective ways of keeping kids in school. That is so because there's a lot of bonding there. The mentor is the liaison with the home as well. The mentor goes to the home, keeps the parents informed, finds out what the issues are, and considers them when looking at how the student is acting in school. The mentor [also] acts as a liaison between the student and the teachers and works with them, counsels them, assists them, provides some advice.* (Guidance counsellor, Hartland)

The classification of special-needs students in Quebec involves a formal process of testing and remediation. Students who need special help are called "quota kids," quota 12 being a behaviour problem, quota 51 a physical handicap, and so on. At Centennial, the special education department handles both behavioural and academic problems. Centennial reports a sharp increase in the number of students who have serious behavioural and learning problems. From 1990 to 1993, students with behaviour problems increased from 12 to 55, those needing special assistance increased from 305 to 385. Three professional non-teaching staff members work on a one-to-one basis with students. Students in special programs are taught more slowly and in groups.

A number of special programs have been developed. Life skills are emphasized in a work-study program for students who are having difficulty in the classroom. Students are placed in local businesses for 900 hours over two years. Four or five placements are usual and teaching staff monitor students while they are on placement.

> *When I was in the old school, I'd bring home reports that were no good. They were good for garbage. And then this year, I brought home so many good reports and my parents praised me: "Congratulations! Keep it up!" I really found that my parents saw a big change in me.* (Student, Centennial)

A remediation and enrichment program in June extends the instructional year for grade 7 and 8 students who are not required to write examinations. Attendance is mandatory at special morning classes, eliminating summer school for some students and allowing others to take courses not offered in the regular program. Students take either two remedial or two academic enrichment courses.

Centennial implemented a dropout prevention program in 1992. Students spend one period a day in the program and the other five periods in regular classes. Four major areas are dealt with: academics (tutoring/remediation, note-taking and study skills); personal development (individual, family, and group counselling; and life skills); career issues (career decision making and work placements); health awareness (sexually transmitted diseases, birth control, drug awareness, stress management, and nutrition). This program was originally funded by the federal government, but its future is in doubt because no other funding sources have been found. Of the 35 students who participated in 1993-94, 70 per cent reported that their attendance had improved, and 63 per cent of the student marks increased by an average of eight per cent.

Students at Kildonan can call on a variety of support services. There is a support group for student-parents (mostly women), organized by a guidance counsellor. It provides emotional support as well as practical information on topics such as family finances and parenting skills. The counsellor also acts as a liaison between the students and their teachers. Natural Helpers is a peer-helping program supported by the school. In 1993, 56 students were trained to help fellow students with all sorts of problems. A teacher assistance team serves as a peer problem-solving group for teachers concerned about students who have unique learning and behaviour patterns. The team meets weekly to discuss students' family-related and behavioural problems.

Vancouver Technical tries to create a personalized caring environment by using small programs, especially for students who are not succeeding in regular classrooms. These programs provide "a safety valve for the main school and a safety net for the students." A program for potential dropouts tries to provide students with a sense of belonging.

> *In a way, we are an informal gang. But we are a good gang; we take care of each other. We offer in many ways what a gang would. We are honest with each other, we don't con each other. And whatever commitments we make, we stick by them. And we survive. We survive the problems that we have at home, the problems that we have with our friends, and the problems that we have caused ourselves in school. It's kind of a tribal thing.*
> (Teacher, Vancouver Technical)

Some people, however, worry about having a number of small communities in a large school. The tensions are particularly pronounced when some programs are seen as "elite." To cope with the tensions of special programs in a large school, Vancouver Technical integrates students into regular programs as they get older and has students and teachers spend only part of their time in special programs. Programs involving students who need more support tend to be more segregated from the rest of the school, through their timetables and their location in portables.

Tensions about special programs are also present at Georges Vanier. Although many people at the school are proud of these programs, critics point to their cost and to the unequal teaching loads that result.

> *There are teachers whose direct contact with students appears to be minimal. We have 30 students in a class and they have six. We can't afford to have one teacher for six students. Someone has to sacrifice to maintain that. Thirty per cent of the teachers are involved with four per cent of the students. In my grade 10 general class, I had 29 kids, including 10 special ed students, three students with behavioural problems, and six brand new Canadians. That's more special education than these teachers have for the entire day. It's very frustrating.*
> (Teacher, Georges Vanier)

In general, the special programs offered at the schools in this study are viewed as critical to the success of students who are having difficulty. The organization of the special help varies. Some schools try hard to keep all students together in class, withdrawing them for extra help only when necessary. Others have elaborate programs where groups of students can work with each other as well as with a teacher whose role differs from that of the regular classroom teacher. The dilemma is whether to minimize or maximize differences. Where differences are maximized, the social relations of the school change, along with the academic. Where inclusion in the regular classroom is emphasized, the issue becomes whether there is enough flexibility to meet students' needs.

Concluding Comments: Clarifying and Valuing the Social

As we noted earlier, some kinds of knowledge have more currency than others. Value depends not simply on what is learned, but on the character development of the student. These schools encourage collaboration, respect for others, and self-discipline along with individual achievement. They do it in many ways: in the everyday climate they establish, in the discipline codes they teach and enforce, in the extracurricular program, and in special programs.

Sometimes the social demands of schools involve only the basic minimum: obeying rules, dressing appropriately, not getting into trouble. This minimum code is only a problem for a small group of students, those who do not see the uses of schooling, and who therefore are not motivated to conform and learn what the school has to offer. These students often end up in special programs, being taught "life skills." They receive detentions and suspensions, but the schools also try hard to motivate them and find a way to teach them the value of schooling.

Students who conform easily to the minimum expectations of the social code can turn their attention to the academic matters. But few schools really challenge the social understandings and ethical premises that students bring to school as long as those understandings do not cause a problem. Since the questions about how to live in a diverse society, how to deal with changing family patterns, gender, power, and cultural expectations are so complex and difficult, this seems a serious omission. Those schools that have a mandate to teach the social — like St. Benedict, Contact, or Joe Duquette — find that it informs every aspect of the curriculum, giving it an ethical meaning, and connecting it to the intellectual. These schools are grappling with the social issues young people face, though they are constrained by the beliefs of their communities, both about what is right and about how wide the role of the school should be. If schools are really going to teach co-operation as well as competition, social and ethical codes as well as academic knowledge, they need a close connection to students' families and a shared understanding on which to base their instruction.

For policymakers and educators, social issues involve controversy. Recognizing differences and ensuring equity, encouraging co-operation in a competitive system, providing for autonomy as well as collaboration, dealing with power differences and ensuring justice — these tasks are never easy. The competing moral and social claims on schools are difficult and complex. This may explain why the more straightforward issues of academic standards and retention are discussed in public policy, while the social issues that appeared so prominent in our case studies are relatively ignored. It may be why schools are left to handle issues of equity, racism, ethics, and power as best they can, going only as far as they can get agreement from their communities to go. It may also explain the move towards more local autonomy and school choice, for such structural arrangements are more likely to promote consensus on social values among parents and to provide a warrant for engaging more deeply in teaching social values.

If schools are to do their job more fully in the social area, policymakers must engage the public in a debate about the moral and social bases of public schooling. Schools cannot teach citizenship skills beyond the minimal level of obeying rules without a clear social and ethical basis for this kind of instruction. They cannot both avoid controversy and engage students in important social issues. At the same time, public institutions must allow room for a diversity of ethical, religious, social, and political views. Is there one set of commitments that all public schools stand for? What kind of diversity is acceptable? Who should decide? How do teachers, parents, and the public learn more about what particular schools stand for? How can schools initiate respectful but critical discussion of social concerns? More policy discussion about the social commitments of the public school would both protect and revitalize schooling.

Chapter 7

Teaching and Teachers: Building Communities of Educators

> *You get a sense that this is a good place A lot of it comes from the commitment of the teachers here... who coach, who sit on committees, who work on the plays, or whatever else is going on at the school.* (Teacher, St. Benedict)
>
> *Well, I have to say that the staff is certainly a strength of the school.... I'm talking about the mix of the staff, the various cultures and ethnic groups they represent, the expertise of the staff. Their willingness...and the amount of time that they put into the programs here is just unbelievable.... I don't think that [the success of the school can be] attributed to any one individual. I think it's a lot of people working together for the common cause.* (Principal, Centennial)
>
> *My mind is engaged, my emotions are engaged. I'm fully engaged in this work. In that sense it is extraordinarily challenging.* (Teacher, Corktown)
>
> *We have wonderful teachers here. The teachers here really care about the students.* (Teacher, Langley)

IN THESE CASE STUDIES, teachers are the central actors. Good teaching, teachers who go to extra lengths for their students, teachers who are lively, engaging and informed, make schools succeed. Where schools have a good reputation in their communities, it is because of the obvious interest that teachers take, the care with which they approach students, parents, and sometimes the wider community, and their willingness to change as the curriculum, the students, and the world change. The question for policy makers is how to create an environment that sustains such commitment.

The language of community and caring is used in these case studies to describe relationships among staff as well as staff relationships with students. A great deal of educational research suggests that good schools are schools where people work harmoniously and purposes are shared (Rutter *et al.*, 1979; Goodlad, 1984; Cobb, 1992; Holmes, 1992; Sergiovanni, 1994; Hargreaves, 1994). Strong collegial relations motivate and support teachers as they continue to learn and change. Although a shared vision promotes collegiality, there are philosophical and material reasons for teachers to disagree as well as co-operate. Teachers struggle over time, resources, status, and territory in the school. Discussions in staff rooms are about timetables, rooms, and preparation time, as well as about curriculum and students. Creating an environment where co-operation and conflict are handled in the best interests of students requires a balance between encouraging the professional autonomy and initiative of teachers, on the one hand, and recognizing the legitimate constraints of the larger community, on the other. Persistent tensions between individual and collective, sameness and diversity, leadership and equality, tradition and change, shape our discussion of teaching in these schools.

Lee and Smith (1995) describe two models of high school organization, bureaucratic and organic. They note that, since the early part of the 20th century, there has been a move towards larger, more comprehensive, bureaucratic and efficient secondary schools. Few educational reform efforts have "succeeded" as well as the development of the comprehensive high school. Recently, however, school reformers have challenged this model, restructuring schools into smaller "organic" or "communitarian" forms, which operate not as bureaucracies where rules and norms are standardized, but as communities where values are shared and tasks are interchangeable. Lee and Smith note that "such organizations typically emphasize shared responsibility for work, shared commitment to a common set of goals, lateral communication, and power in decision-making, and greater personalization and individual discretion framing expectations and behaviour." Knowledge is more integrated and assessment less standardized. They conclude that the schools that follow an organic model are markedly more successful than those that do not.

Like many useful models, this one overgeneralizes while calling our attention to some important social processes. There are large bureaucratic schools and smaller, more informal ones in our study, but all have some rules and policies that must be enforced, all deal with power differences, and all divide work into specialized tasks. At the same time, all strive for collegiality, flexibility and shared purpose.

Communities, like relationships of any kind, are fragile and evolving. They involve structures and habits that encourage inquiry and co-operation, flexibility and respect. This chapter explores the various school processes that shape collegial relations among teachers. It begins with the process of selecting and assigning teachers, then discusses how a shared vision is balanced with the expression of differences in schools. It looks at professional development, leadership, and the role of teachers' organizations. Finally it turns to teaching, exploring how the independence of teachers is central to pedagogy and how changes in the organization of instruction, including interdisciplinary teaching, team teaching, and the use of technology are beginning to change the role of the teacher.

Hiring

These schools vary markedly in the age and experience of their teachers, in the amount of turnover they have experienced, and in the ways hiring policies have shaped the teaching staff. A shortage of qualified teachers was rarely mentioned. Rather, the problem in hiring is rather how to select the best teachers for a particular school. In some schools there has been a good deal of recent hiring; in others, the staff has been in place longer and traditions are well established. In some schools, hiring like-minded teachers is key to developing a staff that can work together and share a vision of education. Other schools have little control over hiring. When they can, they look for specific skills and try to add diversity as well as compatibility. In all cases, personal characteristics are mentioned alongside subject-matter expertise as criteria for hiring.

By and large, the concern at smaller homogeneous schools is to hire like-minded teachers who will "fit" into the school. Pain Court has a young staff, many of whom have been hired recently. The principal wants "la crème de la crème." She asks candidates to spend a few days at the school, where they can interact with the whole staff. She looks for teachers who not only excel in academic ability, but who also fit into the family.

At New Norway, the hiring is done by the principal and vice-principal, although a representative from the county participates in the interview. The principal makes it clear that staff are expected to give freely of their time to students, co-operate with colleagues, and participate in extracurricular activities. Those who don't "fit in" are encouraged to seek placements better suited to their skills and orientation.

Sydney Academy is the oldest school in our study, celebrating its 150th anniversary in 1991. It has not done a great deal of recent hiring, and prides itself on the number of teachers who have stayed at the school throughout their career. A Sydney teacher notes, "We have some teachers who have come almost their first day of teaching and stayed here, developed curricula for our students, and retired from here." When Sydney hires, its reputation attracts teachers who are mindful of and committed to the school's traditions. Many of the staff attended the school themselves. "Academy pride" sustains a sense that the staff are special people, chosen to make a difference.

> *We have a superior staff dedicated to the concept of Sydney Academy. When you say "Sydney Academy," it means something very special to people. We have a school that has a tremendously proud tradition...a tradition of excellence. We want you to enjoy your work and to enjoy coming to Sydney Academy. Morale is terrific. It's a wonderful place to be. You can't think for a moment that doesn't pour over into classrooms.* (Principal, Sydney)

At St. Benedict, about 75 per cent of the teachers were hired by the current administrative team. The researchers found that the principal and vice-principal had deliberately recruited teachers who shared their vision and the core values of the school. Some teachers were encouraged to transfer out when they proved unwilling to work with the vision. As the principal put it:

> *We want a person who has academic qualifications. That's a given, that they are good at what they do. But more [important is that they] be creative, that they have an emotional link to kids, that they think teaching is a vocation and that it's a privilege to work with kids and that you have to give kids respect and treat them with optimism ....We want them to be spiritual people. It's very important that they recognize their spirituality, that they recognize that every person is a gift from God. (Principal,* St. Benedict)

At Hartland, some of the teachers arrive on term contracts as supply teachers, and then stay on. These positions are advertised and candidates are interviewed by the principal and vice-principal, who ask questions about how the candidate would deal with student and staff conflict, and so on. They look for staff who are innovative, not threatened by change, and willing to be part of a cohesive and co-operative team.

Qitiqliq faces a particular set of problems. There is a shortage of Inuit teachers for the secondary school level. Turnover is high, as young teachers come to the north at the start of their teaching careers, then leave as they have families or come to miss the amenities of the south. Ten of 14 teachers were new during the 1993-94 school year; none was Inuit. Three were new graduates, and many others were in their first year or two of teaching. Teachers are hired for their subject backgrounds, particularly their science expertise, as well as their interest in the north. Before they are hired, they are not necessarily prepared to work effectively with Inuit students. Occasionally, they have taken a course or workshop in their teacher education programs that deals with cultural differences. Differences of language and culture make social interaction difficult. The school works at remedying this with an orientation program that provides new teachers with more experienced "buddies." Last year the Community Education Committee initiated an adopt-a-teacher project, pairing teachers with families in the hamlet. A five-day orientation period includes "going out on the land." Teachers must adapt to the school on site.

Langley Fine Arts School has experienced the limits of using a selective hiring policy as a strategy to create a unified staff. As a new school in 1985, it had an unusual opportunity to hire staff who wanted to work at an alternative fine arts school. Despite this, the school ended up, in the words of one teacher, with a "mixed bag." Hiring had to respect seniority provisions across the district, as well as certification requirements. The criteria for hiring were disputed, just as the vision for the school had been. Teachers joined the staff for a variety of reasons: to stay in the same building they had been teaching in, to teach in a small school, or to implement a vision of fine arts education. Today the principal looks for teachers with "a strong commitment to caring for children, a commitment to the fine arts school philosophy, expertise in subject area, an ability to work with parents, and a desire to be part of a team." There are, however, few openings to hire new staff.

Although staff agreement on philosophy is felt to be critical at Contact, the school sometimes has to take teachers who have been sent to them by the board because of their seniority. This method has disadvantages.

> *We've had such terrible problems with people being put in alternative schools who just don't fit in. They don't want to be there, they don't like the way things are operating. It's just the worst mess. And every year there's a couple of serious problems and we have to move people out.* (Principal, Contact)

When staffing is not done through such transfers, the school's hiring committee, which is made up of students and teachers, interviews candidates.

Diversity in staffing is important in a few schools. In these cases, cultural representation is more of an issue than gender. Georges Vanier, a large urban school, has tried to hire a culturally and racially diverse staff. The principal comments, however, that

> *...most of the time, it's a matter of [a] surplus elsewhere in...boards. Sometimes you get teachers laid on you, sometimes you get an opportunity to pick up teachers from other schools who are on the loose. But you really don't get much opportunity to advertise outside except in a special circumstance.*

In new programs where there are no teachers in the system, the school does have some control and tries to diversify its staff.

> *We're in the process of hiring a teacher for a new dance program and...have decided that part of the criteria for hiring will be [an ability] to teach the ethno-cultural component of the program. In fact, I make that a key factor.* (Vice-principal, Georges Vanier)

At Centennial, efforts have also been made to hire teachers from different cultural backgrounds in order to reflect the diversity in the student body.

At both First Nations schools, the staff is about equally split between Native and non-Native teachers. At Joe Duquette, the staff is made up of eight Aboriginals and eight non-Aboriginals, ten males, five females. Hiring is the responsibility of the parent council and the board. They must agree on criteria that take into account "objectives of the program, academic qualifications, religious affiliation." Tensions do arise between the values of the Catholic board and the spiritual traditions of Natives, but so far they have been handled without a major dispute. Cree teachers who are Catholic are not easy to find. Some of the Native teachers have been sought out by the school — their Native traditions are part of what qualifies them to teach here. One teacher commented, "Growing up in a small northern Saskatchewan community prepared me for working at Joe Duquette better than the training at the university." The comment reflects the particular demands of the social and the spiritual at this school, and the necessary interaction of personal and professional knowledge.

At Peguis, all the administrators, office staff, and teacher aides are Native. Twenty-three of 49 staff members are Native, with more non-Natives in the secondary school.

> *We deliberately wanted to have a balance between Native and non-Native teachers. We didn't want to have a totally Native staff, because we wanted to ensure that we get the benefit of both experiences.... Certainly when they go out, they're going to be in contact with non-Native people. As well, we don't want to be accused of unfair dealings.* (Chief, Peguis Band)

Hiring like-minded teachers is a priority in cohesive schools. These schools look for both teaching expertise and personal characteristics that will allow teachers to fit in. Board policies, however, constrain hiring practices and require schools to create a sense of community through a combination of transfers, professional development, and agreements worked out among a diverse staff. In a few schools, diversity is prized as a resource that can enhance the quality of education.

Shared Vision and Differences

> *To me the real key has been the staff. You never have to worry here what other people are thinking of you, or if they care about you or not. It really allows you a lot of room to try things, to do things, and I think that spills over into the classroom, that people have confidence. If you want to try something, you're supported.* (Teacher, St. Benedict)

Some argue that the creation and maintenance of a community requires shared values and ideas about schooling and human nature (Sergiovanni, 1994). Many of the schools in our study strive for just such a shared conception of education. Others, however, characterize school cultures as "fragmented individualism and balkanization" (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1991). Teachers often work behind closed doors, isolated from each other and from the administration. Competition for resources, status and space, as well as philosophical differences, emerge in any staff. Academic teachers tend to protect the status of their subjects, while teachers of other subjects challenge this pre-eminence. Space for teachers to work quietly at school is usually scarce, as are resources for teaching. Time is scarcest of all. In every staffroom, there is tension between individualism and collegiality, professional autonomy and collaboration. The schools in our study strain towards a shared vision, but one that is balanced with a recognition of differences.

At St. Benedict, a shared vision and shared values were the first characteristics named by teachers to explain the school's success.

> *We have a common set of goals. We're all in agreement that we want our students to be successful and we want them to have a sense of community at St. Benedict.... We're all in agreement that our mission statement is our reason for existence and our*

> *reason for a lot of the things we are trying to do.* (Teacher, St. Benedict)

One teacher, however, felt there was danger in too much conformity, and that agreement on goals has to be balanced with encouraging individual differences and initiative.

> *...Allow people to take the stands that they need to take to maintain their own integrity. Let's have some flexibility built into the structures to allow for that, and to nurture it, and to affirm it, even if it's not necessarily an interest or a path that you as an individual agree with or care to support.... (Teacher,* St. Benedict)

Time is a constraint on collegiality at St. Benedict, as elsewhere. When, in addition to their classroom duties, teachers work with students before and after classes and meet with colleagues to plan new initiatives, it is hard for them to find time for the informal socializing that builds trust and community. Although staff support for the participatory management style of the administrative team at St. Benedict is widespread, some teachers express concerns about the time required for consensual decision-making, and about too many committees and too much administrative direction in committees. They believe that some issues, such as student discipline, could be managed more effectively by a vice-principal than by classroom teachers.

Sydney Academy also has a very cohesive staff, based on shared philosophy and traditions. Expressions of differences, however, are encouraged. Idiosyncratic behaviour, differences in ideology, and rigorous scholarly debate are considered part of the academic tradition the academy wants to maintain. One teacher described relations among the staff as "deep friendship" rather than just hospitable, indicating a sense of community and belonging where "people are allowed to be who they are." The Academy prides itself on having "real characters" on staff. As one secretary said when speaking of the teachers and the administrators: "They don't put everybody in the same category."

The principal at Langley also believes in the importance of "focus." The school has gone through a difficult time establishing a shared view of what should be achieved, despite a clear commitment by everyone in the school to the arts. When the school was established, members of the teaching staff had very different ideas about what the curriculum should look like, based on different assumptions about what students need. Some wanted the curriculum transformed by integrating the arts into every area, while others wanted the arts added on to, but not interfering with, a rigorous academic curriculum. Disagreements were expressed in demands about timetables.

> *Good people, all in their own right, but just not a cohesive group. It was a very divided faculty when we got in, and those of us who were keenly interested in the fine arts and knew the philosophy and knew the goal from early, early days, were very frustrated because it was almost like two camps. People would sit separately in staff meetings.* (Teacher, Langley)

A common commitment to students and to creating an alternative in the fine arts brought the staff together. A combination of teacher turnover and an increase in discussion and understanding have produced a school where relationships among teachers are now good.

> *We have taken a common denominator as a survival path. We couldn't merge the two, so ...one group has updated some of its ideas and got in touch a little bit more with what some of the rest of us want, and the rest of us who had a higher ideal have come down....It's a good learning experience for me. I really felt like sticking it out because I really believe in what is happening.* (Teacher, Langley)

Small size is no guarantee of cohesion. One of the achievements at Appalaches has been to create a cohesive staff from two separate groups after "an historic imbroglio." Two towns — Lac Etchemin and Ste-Justine — had been rivals for the comprehensive school. Ste-Justine won out. At first, parents in Lac Etchemin didn't want their children to go to Ste-Justine, which is in the country. They even went so far as to open a parallel school. But as the population shrank over the years, the second school had to be closed.

The Ste-Justine team did not welcome the Lac Etchemin teachers, who had more seniority. Some Ste-Justine teachers were afraid of losing their jobs because the student population was in decline. In addition, the Ste-Justine team was a tightly knit group with its own work habits and management style, different from those of the Lac Etchemin team. The Lac Etchemin team was unhappy because it was accustomed to having duties assigned according to seniority, whereas at Appalaches the prevailing criterion is competency.

> *The principal had to persuade the Lac Etchemin team to accept this approach. Everyone had to make compromises and the principal had to show great diplomacy. Now the bickering has given way to understanding and good-natured kidding. Everybody appreciates the work the principal has done for the school and recognizes his humane qualities and his well-developed ability to listen and to admit his mistakes. He is always accessible to his staff and open to discussion or confidences.* (Case study, Appalaches)

Larger schools cannot rely on staff simply knowing each other because they teach together. Népisiguit has 70 teachers, and departments become the focus of collegiality. Each department looks after the pedagogical and administrative management of its own sector, as well as the quality of its courses. Departments seem to be autonomous in their day-to-day management and in promoting their respective disciplines. Some teachers and the principal pointed out that the departmental structure has a positive impact on the school's success. Several say that the "department constitutes the heart of the school, each a small school within the large school." They also feel that "a spirit of co-operation, collaboration, and a concern for excellence are evident within each department." However, exchanges within departments are so prevalent that teachers regret that sometimes weeks go by without any communications with the other departments. The department structure, even though it is beneficial in many ways, leads to less frequent or spontaneous exchanges among all teachers.

At a school as large as Georges Vanier, disagreements emerge about the value of new programs, pedagogy, standards, and workloads. The following compilations of staff comments give a sense of these debates. On the one hand, the "innovators" say:

> *There's a group of people who are very much committed to their students' success, and then there's a few who want to go back to 1950.*

> *I think our non-traditional programs are at risk of disappearing or being cut back. We're also at risk of attack by traditional departments who themselves feel frustrated and under the gun.*
>
> *We represent change, but we also represent, to some of them, teachers who aren't doing a teacher's task.*
>
> *There are people here who say that all of these initiatives for special-needs students, and all the people like me who are assigned to these special programs and have been taken out of the regular classroom, have resulted in larger class sizes. They say it's not fair and that we are investing all this time and energy into these losers who are going to drop out anyway.*

On the other hand, the "traditionalists" say:

> *The kids get this view that they are different or special because so many people are running interference for them. They don't hesitate to say they'll complain about you to the vice-principal.*
>
> *To assess any program properly, you've got to come up with a really definite idea of the ideal outcome, and then measure the students coming out of the program against the ideal. That's part of our problem. The measurement sometimes doesn't take place very accurately.*
>
> *Some people do not see some of the more progressive programs we've introduced here as being in the best interests of the kids. Also, the teachers in charge of these programs get time off from regular teaching duties to provide leadership in these programs. There's resentment because this is forcing larger class sizes, and there needs to be readjustment.*
>
> *One of the things they talk about is self-esteem — all these people who cater to special needs say they want kids to feel good about themselves and then they'll start to learn. It's putting the cart before the horse. The only reason kids ever feel good about themselves in school is because they are learning, and there is no magic way to [achieve] that.*

Resolution of these disagreements depends on willingness to compromise all round. At Georges Vanier, there is no consensus, but continuing debate.

Staff conflicts are often phrased in terms of conflicts about time. Time is a scarce resource, a currency of exchange, and a way of valuing one activity over another. The key time requirement for teachers is classroom time, which is fixed by a timetable that dictates when teachers teach and when they have preparation time or breaks. In addition to this core requirement, teachers also need time to meet with other adults — parents, other teachers, administrators. Finally, they require time to mark assignments, co-ordinate extracurricular activities, engage in professional development, and provide extra help for students. School priorities are evident in the way time is allocated.

At Langley, the debate about fine arts versus academics is reflected in debates about class time. Academic teachers complain that the fine arts simply take too much time.

> *You start off with 85 hours and you say that is the bare bones basics. Then they come up with five hours for work experience, another three hours for a drama field trip, then two hours on an art field trip and another three hours for a dance field trip. You are not talking about 85 hours any more, you are talking 70 to 75 hours. You can't do it.* (Teacher, Langley)

At Joe Duquette, the tension between the school's healing emphasis and its academic emphasis is evident in a teacher's comment about time: "The counselling role takes up a lot of energy and time, and we accept that. The academics may suffer a little bit."

At Contact, the time allocated to a mandatory weekly staff meeting makes a statement about school priorities and also puts a strain on busy schedules. Although the roots of the school lie in a collective, conflicts now are resolved not by consensus, but by Robert's Rules of Order. Several teachers mentioned to the researchers that there used to be a fair amount of conflict at staff meetings as a result of having to reach consensus on every issue, but that staff relations have improved in recent years. These improvements are attributed to a well-written and thorough policy manual specifying how the school is to be run, and a number of workshops on interpersonal skills that staff requested.

The ideal of a like-minded community of teachers is held by some schools, though not by all. Some conflicts among teachers are inevitable, even when they share a vision. These conflicts are often based on strongly held views about what is good for students, but they may also be based on concerns about time, resources, and status. A shared set of assumptions helps teachers resolve conflicts, but an agreed-upon procedural basis for decision-making also works, as it does in any democratic society.

Professional Development

Continuous professional development is more important than new hiring in maintaining the quality of teaching, especially as staff age. The career structure of a teacher is "flat," with no salary increases for merit, and annual increments stopping after the first ten years or so when the maximum for the category is reached. A new teacher can expect to have more or less the same responsibilities as someone who has been teaching for 30 years, unless he or she moves into an administrative or specialist curriculum position. Teachers can cope with pressures for change with confidence and enthusiasm only with ongoing professional education.

Good working relationships among teachers create the conditions for continual learning and inquiry. As one commentator puts it, "Collegial exchanges among teachers are both more frequent and varied than outsiders might imagine, and less concentrated and consequential than teachers require to reinvent their work and their workplace" (Little, 1990; Little and McLaughlin, 1993). In school, everyday interactions are the major form of professional development. Encouraging teachers to talk to and learn from each other is integral to a collegial culture.

At New Norway, as at other schools, teachers feel that time is scarce. Classes take up the day. Staff meetings and committees are a way of sharing information, but discussions about students take place informally in the staff room over coffee. Little is committed to paper. The staff room is the key to communication in this school, where the small staff, all of whom work after school and on weekends, can get to know each other fairly well.

> *I try to make sure that I'm in the staff room in the morning. I get here about a quarter after 7:00, so I get most of my work done at least an hour before 8:30, and then I come down and see people as they come in. Some of the things we talk about are not really important, but it's nice to feel you are part of*

> *something. And if you have something you need to discuss, usually you can pinpoint somebody whom you think would be easy to talk to, and say, "Have you ever had this happen?* (Teacher, New Norway)

A supportive atmosphere makes it possible to discuss professional issues openly.

> *The sharing here is a positive thing. "I've got this problem. Have you got this problem? What can we do to make this better?" It's done not to find fault but to find solutions.* (Teacher, New Norway)

At St. Benedict, collegial relations support teachers inside and outside the classroom:

> *...Knowing that there are teachers I can go to if I'm having a bad day, just to talk to them, or to have somebody come into the class to help out with supervising the students and stuff like that.* (Teacher, St. Benedict)

At the same time, new ideas from outside the school are important for change and renewal. In the process of destreaming grade 9, St. Benedict teachers have benefited from ongoing help from board consultants with policy and content expertise, resource materials, in-service training, funding for release time to support joint projects with other teachers, and school planning processes. Collegial interaction is led by the principal.

> *In our staff meetings we have a professional development component every time, even if it means cutting some of the business agenda to make sure we get it in. They've made it a priority in meetings. Also, they encourage us to do professional readings. And [the principal is] excellent. He'll put an article in my mailbox if he thinks it has to do with [something I'm doing].* (Teacher, St. Benedict)

Grandy's River provides a contrast. There have been no days for in-service training for the staff in recent years. The principal is reluctant to close the school for professional development because so many days are already lost because of poor weather. Both the principal and vice-principal miss district activities because they feel it more important to be teaching. School staff appear to have different views about the importance of professional development. Five teachers claim to have attended no formal activities at all, and another comments that his private reading and informal networking is "far more valuable than the formal." Some teachers do attend conferences and subscribe to professional magazines and two are enrolled in university programs. A number of teachers want more professional development. The researchers speculate that the lack of professional development may account for the school's "emphasis on the traditional and the apparent lack of innovation in instructional strategies."

At Hartland, a new teacher induction program is being piloted by the New Brunswick Teachers' Association in conjunction with the provincial Department of Education. One of the new teachers involved describes how it works:

> *Once a week, I meet with my mentor to talk about how I'm doing. We talk about all kinds of things — how I'm interacting with students, my lesson plans, ideas about evaluation, classroom management, those kinds of things. We get a full period for this. Every week I get feedback on my teaching. Either my mentor or the principal observes me teaching, then we have a discussion about my strengths and the weaknesses. I'm getting lots of feedback and help. I feel very positive about this program.*

Teachers at Georges Vanier choose much of their professional development to reflect their own interests and needs. Attendance at summer and evening courses, meetings held by provincial, national, or international associations, and conferences of many kinds is common for staff. Teachers are required to take some courses to receive certification in new areas. The school and the board provide some funding and release time when appropriate. The director of education reports that although "we have downsized our organization tremendously, the dollars for staff development have been left virtually untouched."

School-based professional development at Georges Vanier is focused on school priorities like technology and critical skills.

> *The people who were [involved with] the critical skills [program] were school leaders. Vanier didn't have to get*

> *people from outside to come in. They did their own workshops, and it's the best professional development I've seen before or since, when a dedicated group of staff bring their skills to the table, their curriculum, share their stuff and are willing to risk themselves to make things better. And they did that repeatedly.* (Former principal, Georges Vanier)

Nonetheless, a 1992-93 survey conducted throughout the board indicated that North York teachers, including a high proportion of Vanier teachers, are generally dissatisfied with the professional development available to help them acquire instructional strategies for teaching students at different academic levels.

Professional development must be both formal and informal. To be effective, it requires a cohesive staff who interact with each other on professional issues. As we have seen in other areas, the diverse urban school offers a range of possibilities that exceeds the capacities of smaller rural schools. On the other hand, if the staff is small, close co-operation with colleagues is easier to achieve.

Leadership

The emphasis these schools place on the need for the principal to be a leader is balanced by a great deal of talk about collegiality and professional initiative. There are examples of schools where principals have been catalysts for major educational change and new successes. At the same time, there are many examples of leadership coming from elsewhere in the school community. One year after this study, the principals had changed in seven of the 21 schools studied, suggesting how transitory any change that depends simply on the principal can be.

Principals exercise the role of leader in different ways. Their style of decision-making and community outreach is the discussion topic in the case studies. There is no single model of how to do the job successfully. All these principals, however, reach out to collaborate with staff.

At Grandy's River, the principal is viewed as a strong leader. All the parents interviewed spoke positively about him, and both parents and staff respect him as a good teacher who acts as a role model and encourages good teaching. He is reluctant to take time away from teaching for meetings. For instance, he puts information into staff mail boxes instead of calling a meeting about it. He doesn't want to "eat into their energy" for teaching. Teachers appreciate his informal leadership style.

> *I'm not going to pressure them. If they feel the need to respond...they will. I think some schools would say, "All right, let's get together as staff." I stay clear of that.* (Principal, Grandy's River)

At St. Benedict, the philosophy is "servant leadership," following the Christian principle of leadership through service to others. Teachers like the principal's participatory management style. He puts a lot of emphasis on input from all the staff: "We deal with a lot of the stuff at the department-head level. But even at that level, we're asked to go to our departments first before any concrete decisions are made." School committees are also influential.

> *A lot of the decision-making comes from committee discussion and forums. Teachers usually collect information, bring it to committee, dialogue, narrow it down, and take it back to staff. Sometimes staff will have further input and may have a final say in the decision. Or, from what they've collected, administration will make the decision.* (Teacher, St. Benedict)

In this system, final authority rests with the administrators, who choose staff, set up committees, and make final decisions, but consultation is highly valued. The support of the staff is the key to success.

Qitiqliq received a *Reader's Digest* award for educational leadership. Leadership means something different here because it cannot be separated from relations between Inuit and Qablunaat (white, southern) cultures. Even the practice of naming an individual leader, as opposed to a collective, has cultural overtones. At Qitiqliq, leadership is an elusive concept that has many connotations: fairness, organizational abilities, innovativeness, an entrepreneurial spirit, influence, dynamism, and vision.

> *Our leaders are people who, when there is something to be said publicly, they say, or they run things, or they go out into the front to make a presentation. They do all the talking for the community.* (Former chair, Community Education Committee)

The concern here is not power, but public visibility.

The principal and vice-principal are known as visible leaders who have earned respect and trust and who project an image of dedication and credibility in both school and community. One reason for their success is that "they're good at letting others do the talking for them," according to the chair of the Community Education Committee. These two women are known for their ability to engage people in decision-making. They represent stability in a school where teachers are transient. They have different styles. The principal, who has lived in the north for over 30 years, is known for her ability to negotiate and mediate with the community. The vice-principal is also from the south, but has lived in Arviat for 18 years, is married to an Inuk, and acts as a substitute pastor of the Alliance Church. Her own children attend the school. She is known for her curriculum initiatives, creativity with timetables and advocacy for students. These women represent and are fully familiar with southern schooling, but they manage to move between southern and northern cultures, earning respect from both.

At Joe Duquette, leadership is collective. Staff meetings, held each week, begin with a prayer and are conducted as a talking circle.

> *The principal says, "What should we do?" He is an expert at saying, "Let's decide as a group the direction this issue will take." And it comes from within. This would be a good lesson for any administrator to learn.* (Teacher, Joe Duquette)

A sense of humour is considered important at Joe Duquette: "We take our job seriously, not ourselves." Time is also important, as are patience and perseverance. The rewards that keep teachers involved are intrinsic to the job.

> *I'm happy here. I love it here and I'm not in a rut. It's always changing. My job description is changed every semester and I'm learning all the time.* (Teacher, Joe Duquette)

> *I've learned something about Aboriginal culture.... I've also learned another way of organizing and administering a school. And I think I've learned a little about myself....I know that I will never have a job that is more satisfying. Staff are the key ingredient in making up a school and if the staff are willing to work together — We have to be learners, otherwise the students sure as heck won't be.* (Principal, Joe Duquette)

At Langley, the principal also stresses collaboration. Teachers experience a great deal of autonomy. He has a background in science, not fine arts, and he encourages student-centred pedagogy. The principal comments that the teachers "are very possessive of their kids and of their territory, and rightfully so. They are very proud of their programs."

At larger schools, relations are more complex and formalized. Centennial has had a number of strong principals, under whom the school has developed a reputation for discipline.

> *My very first meeting with the staff was a hard-hitting one. I spoke with them for about three hours. My message was that I am here not as a principal of a school, but as an administrator. I am here as an educational leader. And those of you who are not going to accept my leadership, you have a choice, and that is to ask for a transfer, because there is no other way. I am going to tell you what is going to be done.* (Former principal, Centennial)

> *I felt there was no educational leadership at the school.... My vision was what it is today, that this would be a good school, it would be one of the best schools.* (Former principal, Centennial)

At Centennial, leadership involves "the ability to dream," an emphasis on discipline, and the creation of new programs. The present principal is concerned with collegiality and openness but emphasizes that, ultimately, he is responsible for the school: "You've got to realize that the buck stops here." And the staff see him as a leader:

> *The leadership in this school, in my mind, without a doubt, comes from [the principal]. Everyone here knows where [he] stands. There is nothing wishy-washy about his statements, and he respects people who agree to disagree. He does not make decisions unilaterally — consultation is done.* (Administrator, Centennial)

At Georges Vanier, the principal's role is emphasized less. Teachers appreciate his collaborative style. He says he wants to involve as many people as possible in decisions so that "they take responsibility and feel part of the picture." The idea is to "act as a liberating force, that allows individual innovation and initiative to flourish."

> *From a leadership point of view, it's certainly the principal who sets the tone, and our principal is a man who is very open, very receptive, and non-threatening. If you have an opinion, he listens and invites input, and his focus is definitely on kids.* (Vice-principal, Georges Vanier)

Another vice-principal stated: "My goal is to make things happen. If a teacher comes here with an idea, I like to make it happen if I can." Teachers like the autonomy this allows, as well as the support for their initiatives. A math teacher talked about a course he is developing:

> *I'm going to develop it. Everybody seems to take my word for it, although I'm sure the head will check it over. It's just another illustration of the autonomy we have here.*

A new physical education teacher recalled that, in her first year of teaching, she expressed a desire to develop an Ontario Academic Course that had never been taught at Georges Vanier. She was given a free hand to develop the course "from scratch." A business studies teacher said:

> *If staff have a program or even a course they want to try, they've always been able to count on good support from the school administration. I know I have. In my first couple of years, there were two new courses that I wanted to introduce, and I got all kinds of support, and fortunately my own department went along too. They did draw a line at a third thing I wanted to try, but I'm biding my time, and we'll get a chance.* (Business teacher, Georges Vanier)

Some of the dilemmas of the principal's role are illustrated at Hartland. A previous principal, who had been at Hartland for 39 years, as a student, teacher, and principal, was committed to an academic vision that is now being challenged. The new principal's vision is directed towards a more inclusive and student-centred approach, reflecting the current direction of the board and the New

Brunswick Department of Education. Teachers are split, some favouring the strong academic foundation, others preferring a focus on social and personal life skills.

> *There remain a number of teachers at the school who question or who do not believe that it's their mandate to teach these socially poor, at-risk kids.* (District office supervisor, Hartland)

> *The traditional teachers, conservative teachers living in the conservative Maritimes, don't tend to jump on bandwagons very quickly. I think [the principal] is very progressive in trying to buy into solid educational research practices.* (Teacher, Hartland)

The principal sees himself as a leader, working with teachers and mediating at the same time.

> *I see myself as the person who's got to show leadership, who's got to work with the teachers in a collaborative way to set directions, to make sure that the standards of this school are upheld, and to provide stimulus for growth. That could be through encouraging people, through things I've learned, or through asking people to get involved. It could be facilitating people who say they'd really like to do something, providing resources for them. But I think it also comes down to the principal believing in education, believing in what the school is all about, and working hard to bring all of the facets of education together and co-ordinate them.* (Principal, Hartland)

One of the striking features of our case studies is the lack of discussion in these schools about teacher evaluation. Although these evaluations do take place, they are often informal. And there are few consequences, for salary is not tied to merit. As a result, there appears to be a distinct lack of interest in the process.

An exception is Népisiguit, where, in an atmosphere of good relations between the principal and the teachers, evaluations are seen as a way of improving practice, not passing judgement. The teacher evaluation program, developed in 1987, recommends a co-operative approach between the evaluator (the assistant superintendent of education) and the teachers. The evaluation is, in a way, a professional development activity, as the teacher identifies specific objectives to be reached, the time it will take to reach them, the means to attain them, and the resources available. The program includes several stages, in one of which the teachers analyze their own performance. The teacher evaluation is done every three to five years, or more frequently if need be. Teachers are satisfied with the process and appreciate it.

The model of leadership described earlier, where the administration supports teachers' professional autonomy, where teachers are encouraged to be responsible to their own code of ethics and their own sense of the students' welfare, is the professional ideal. But schools are always, to some extent, bureaucratic organizations responsible to boards, ministries, and parents. As a result, the ideal of the autonomous teacher must be balanced with a recognition of the legitimate power of the administration.

In this study, the principal plays a role in school change in different ways, relating to the community, providing leadership, supporting teachers, and developing consensus. Every setting requires a different set of responses. The principal is at the intersection of conflicting demands, balancing professional autonomy and responsibility to the larger community.

Teachers' Organizations

Teachers' organizations are a powerful political force affecting the lives of teachers and students. The collective agreements they negotiate affect the way time is allocated, timetables are made, professional development is carried out, and hiring is done. But in the case studies, the politics of teacher unions receive relatively little attention. At Georges Vanier, the teacher representative declined to be interviewed. In the case studies of other schools, teacher representatives are not mentioned. It may be due to the methodology used, but when the teachers' collective position was articulated in the studies, it was usually by someone outside the school.

All teachers across the country are represented by a union or association of some form. In some provinces, there are several. For example, in Ontario, teachers are organized by level (elementary, secondary), religion (Catholic or not), language (French and English), and sex; in New Brunswick, by language (French and English); and in Quebec, by religion and language. Membership is compulsory. In addition to negotiating agreements about salary and working conditions, teachers' unions are important political groups that affect the direction of education policies. The collective agreements they negotiate usually specify how long a teacher can teach, how many students can be in a class, and how much preparation time is necessary. The organizations representing teachers and the agreements they negotiate constitute another centralizing force that constrains the options available at the school. At the same time, these organizations protect the working conditions of teachers.

In Quebec, the Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec (the French-speaking teachers' union) represents the vast majority of francophone teachers in the province. It is a powerful force in the school. Frequently conflict between the teachers and the ministry has increased the tendency towards centralization. The Quebec Ministry of Education and the Centrale negotiate the role and form of teachers' participation in the life of the school.

At Les Etchemins, a history of conflict between administration and teachers has shaped working relationships. A new principal worked to change the atmosphere from one where the teachers are very divided and often unmotivated. However, the principal must always take the negotiated rights of teachers into account when he makes decisions. Their collective agreement specifies their workload and how they must be consulted.

The Peguis Teachers' Association is an organization of a different kind. It negotiates directly with the school board and little conflict occurs. Both parties recognize the primacy of Native traditions and their agreement emphasizes common goals.

At Népisiguit, teachers belong to a local association called Association des professeurs de Népisiguit (which includes the principal and vice-principals) as well as to their provincial labour union. Its purpose is to develop harmony between teachers, enhance communication, and promote professional development. Changes in working conditions, however, did cause some tension between teachers and administrators when the province mandated a semester system and lengthened class periods. Teachers are teaching four periods a day, and the collective agreement allows them only enough preparation time to take one of those periods for preparation in three semesters out of four. The researchers noted that during the semester when teachers have to (as they put it) teach the full four classes every day, without spare preparation time, as well as doing their other teaching-related duties, the task seems nearly insurmountable for many teachers. Some admit to withdrawing totally from anything that does not have to do directly with teaching.

The implementation of the semester system and its attendant difficulties have contributed to a more onerous and less rewarding work environment. It divided teachers and complicated communications between some management staff and several teachers.

At Langley, the collective agreement is a constraint on timetabling, but the school can decide on its own timetable.

> *What's compounded the challenges that [the current principal] has to deal with, that I did not have to deal with, is the unionization of teachers....That has had a severe impact in terms of the restrictiveness of the contract. I never had to worry about a school day that could only be six-and-a-half hours long. Or staff — I never had to worry about teaching blocks that had to be consecutive [and] it was easier for me to select staff than it is now. There was no seniority issue.... I'm not blaming the teachers' union, but the very nature of the union contract has put some handcuffs on what you can do.* (Former administrator, Langley)

Teachers are generally supportive of the union, but some voice concerns about the lack of flexibility negotiated contracts entail for the school.

> *I sense that a lot of the staff here are willing to have the flexibility that it takes to operate this type of a program, but the restrictions are provincial, based on what we can do here in this province and based on what the union will allow us to do. I don't know how we can lift those limiting factors, but I think they need to be lifted. For us to function adequately, the whole concept of the school year and the school day has got to change.* (Teacher, Langley)

> *Because of union contracts, we've had to block all the kids' art into [either] afternoons or mornings, to free up the academic teachers.... In the last year a lot of our staff were concerned that they weren't seeing their kids at the beginning of a day and at the end of the day, just to touch base to make sure they have their homework and everything. Well, we don't have any control over that now, because we have a contract that [dictates this situation].* (Teacher, Langley)

At Corktown, one of the alternative schools in Toronto, the off-site principal points out the limits on school flexibility that union contracts present:

> *[The contract] specifies the rights and obligations of teachers — it ties them down very specifically. But there's always been this interesting dynamic where the federation sort of agrees to look the other way on alternative schools, providing that no teacher in an alternative school goes out and makes a fuss about what's going on..... If someone says, "Look, the teaching assignment that I have been given is contrary to federation rules," and goes to the federation, you've got a problem .... We deal with each situation separately. Frankly, I find it a pain in the neck. I wish there were some kind of recognition that alternative schools don't function the way regular schools do.*

School administrators tend to argue that contract-based rules for hiring hamper them in competing for the best people. In a time of scarce resources, flexibility is often the first, if inadvertent, casualty of contracts.

> *Maximums become minimums. It may seem like a major achievement when you create a maximum class size, but, in times of severe budget restraint, what is also created is the minimum class size. Sometimes greater flexibility leads to more effective organizations.* (Superintendent, Vancouver School Board)

The very constraints that may be seen as a problem, however, are intended to protect, maintain, and improve the quality of teachers' working conditions. Teachers feel that better working conditions improve morale, which, in turn, affects student performance.

> *That strike last May — [the media] made it out to be about teachers wanting raises — but it was primarily for the protection of special programs for handicapped students and English as a second language programs.... I know unions have their problems, and there's some self-serving aspect to them for sure.... I don't mind that either, that workers get better conditions. But I also see it as protective of the better*

> *aspects of public education.* (Superintendent, Vancouver School Board)

The superintendent of schools pointed out that in times of severe budget constraints, teachers' unions help preserve education services: "When you do get into budget problems, it's often the union contracts and union action that protect basic education."

A teacher at Contact described the dilemmas as follows:

> *It is hard to choose.... You want things to be more democratic and localized but, on the other hand, how democratic is a society without trade unions? It's a tough decision and I haven't resolved it.*

Teachers' autonomy and working conditions are at least partly protected by their unions. The agreements negotiated by the unions may limit flexibility at the school, but they do so in the name of fairness and teacher well-being across the whole educational system.

Teaching

> *Teaching is, in a way, thankless in that you don't know the results of what you do, except when people phone you up or come by or come back for a visit. [Or sometimes you see it] in the classroom, the spark in someone's eye because all of a sudden they understand some concept, some new idea, they get a new awareness of the world, of themselves. Those are successes. It's a lifelong process...they're hard to measure, but you know that good things are happening.* (Teacher, Joe Duquette)

Teachers have a professional responsibility to decide on instructional approaches, even while the content of what they teach is subject to external guidelines. The most common pedagogical discussions that teachers had with the researchers concerned the importance of "student-centred" pedagogy, as it is called at Langley, and "lively and dynamic teaching methods," as it is called at Népisiguit. Educators emphasized the importance of active involvement by students, and the necessity to adapt teaching to students' various needs and learning styles. Teachers at Contact, an alternative school, identified the following qualities as effective: belief in students, calmness, compassion, sincerity, flexibility, good listening skills, and "friendly" professionalism. Good teachers are open to learning from students, socially conscious, and tolerant, work hard, know their subject, and plan their lessons well.

At New Norway, in a more conservative environment, pedagogy is equally personal and caring. The researchers spent some time observing New Norway teachers in action:

> *[The teacher] moves around the room, speaking to each group, answering questions and helping students who are in difficulty. Occasionally, he speaks to the whole class, sharing a question that has been posed to him and inviting students to respond. One student laughs in response to a joke told by his companion. "Share the joke, boys," the teacher urges. They do so, everyone laughs and work resumes again.* (Case study, New Norway)

This class is typical of many at New Norway, where students focus on their work individually or in small groups so that teachers are able to spend time with those who need additional support. Students can get up and leave the room without being challenged by the teacher. It may be that this sense of autonomy encourages them to focus on the task at hand. A mathematics and science teacher at New Norway talked about the importance of students feeling good about themselves. He gives them lots of opportunities for success because he thinks it helps them develop self-confidence. He also wants them to develop good work habits and to "accept responsibility for their own work."

Teaching is not seen as a technical task but as a set of complex relationships with students. Students are well aware that it is not just the course content that matters, but how a teacher encourages them to learn.

> *I think that before teachers get their teaching degree, they should take a course in personality or something. You see teachers that enjoy teaching, like Miss [teacher's name]. When you're in her class, sometimes you know the topic is going to be boring but you listen because you don't want to hurt her feelings. So you sit there and listen because she's a nice person. And she tries.* (Student, Georges Vanier)

Engaging and motivating all students is hard to achieve, however, and none of these schools would claim to do so.

Some of the smaller schools have school-wide discussions about instructional approaches. The principal at Langley both models individualized instruction in his own classes and holds workshops for other teachers to promote the approach. He draws on the British Columbia Ministry of Education's *Year 2000* reforms, which emphasize student-centred instruction. At New Norway, the combination of elementary and secondary students in a small school where personal interaction with students is expected produces a strongly student-oriented pedagogy. The principal is an instructional leader, taking an interest in each teacher's approach.

But even at some smaller schools where students are well-known to teachers, it is a struggle to turn knowledge of and care about students into effective, challenging, and involving instruction. At Grandy's River, for example, the principal has clear ideas about how instruction should change to involve students more actively in their own learning. He feels strongly that, in general, teachers place too much emphasis on giving students information, and not enough on values and the internalization of ideas.

> *The bulk of the teaching [here] and across Canada is information and regurgitation, and that's it. I don't think we're truly educating young minds.* (Principal, Grandy's River)

The 1994 handbook for teachers at Grandy's describes "ideal" classrooms as places where students listen to each other's informed views, defend their own positions, and attempt to resolve conflicting points of view. The principal encourages this ideal in his classroom by engaging students in dialogue and simulations of events. He feels "pushed by time, " however, and by the necessity to prepare for provincial examinations. Other teachers express a similar commitment. The English teacher combines a strong emphasis on grammar with creative writing, lots of discussion, and "linking literature to life." The science teacher emphasizes environmental awareness and problem-solving, and gets students to enter science fairs and use computers.

In spite of the above examples, our researcher concluded that pedagogical reform is not a priority at Grandy's River. This conclusion may have been coloured by the fact that several teachers were uncomfortable about being observed, and declined the researcher's request to sit in on classroom sessions. The researcher noted that:

> *Grandy's River is a traditional school, with reliance on traditional teaching strategies. There are few signs of staff interest in new strategies for instruction, and most activities take place in classrooms with one teacher. During the study, there were no whole-staff discussions of instructional strategies or workshops on current trends, and few signs of collaborative efforts among teachers.*

In large schools, pedagogical discussion often takes place in departments. At Kildonan, the social studies department has a reputation for being innovative. It functions in a collaborative way, in an open area, with its own library and computers. An increased number of students have chosen social studies in the school, and teachers are invited to speak all over the province about co-operative learning, mixed-ability groupings, and communal approaches.

> *It's because of the physical space. It's far more co-operative than most traditional high school departments in that physically we are always bumping into each other. I guess we see it like a vocational area in terms of the layout and space where there is a lot of interaction between students and teachers.* (Social studies department head, Kildonan).

> *You can do all the technical stuff you want, but it is useless if the person is not motivated. To me social studies has relevance because we can get into issues. If we can drive it with issues, with conflicts in history, like the Winnipeg strike, immigration today, we can get them excited enough about the content that they will be driven to read.* (Social studies department head, Kildonan)

This approach is a co-operative activity with a shared philosophical foundation.

> *We are...more committed to mixed-ability groupings, accepting students who traditionally have not been accepted into a university entrance program....We take them and try to work on their writing and on their self-concept and we tend to approach it the way an elementary teacher would approach a class.* (Social studies department head, Kildonan)

The Quebec Ministry of Education plays a larger, more direct role in pedagogy than other provincial ministries, and its influence works through school boards directly down the line to departments in the schools. Teachers at Les Etchemins receive detailed guidelines from the province outlining what they will teach and how they will teach it. At the board, there are curriculum consultants who meet regularly with staff in particular subject areas.

There are two kinds of consultants: administrators, who interpret programs of the Quebec Ministry of Education, and facilitators, who are experts and developers on the lookout for new approaches and methods. The researchers felt that most consultants belong to the second category: "Our role as consultants is to bring teachers to question the teaching methods, to bring them sustenance, so to speak." Consultants have no hierarchical authority, only their competence, and must gain the teachers' trust.

In this context, the consultants find it difficult to define their role. They are a teaching resource, but also a link in curriculum matters between the ministry, school board, and teachers. They serve as advisors to teachers, school principals, and the education services of the school board. Through the curriculum consultant teaching materials are selected, sessions with authors of manuals are organized, and materials are evaluated with teachers. The consultant also offers technical support, providing or developing tests and teaching materials. Finally, the consultant informs and trains teachers when a new program or new approach needs to be tried out or implemented.

Teachers are caught between the need to cover material outlined in the curriculum and the need to adapt material to particular students. At Centennial, there is a wide variety of teaching styles and educational philosophies. Many of the teachers employ traditional teacher-directed practices, while others use newer approaches such as co-operative learning. Grade 8 groupings in a newly formed middle school are challenging traditional pedagogy by offering students individualized instruction, groupwork, and peer feedback. The program has been successful at engaging students and lowering the dropout rate.

> *I never enjoyed English before this experience. It allows me to express my opinions and respect other opinions, also to express emotions toward the material.* (Student, Centennial)

This approach has not been accepted easily. Some people object that there are now "two English departments," one for the junior grades and one for the senior.

In large schools, less traditional strategies are employed most often in alternative programs and in the earlier grades. Co-operative learning, where students help each other instead of competing, is a strategy used in an alternative program for independent learners at Vancouver Technical and in "Core 8" groupings for the youngest students in the school. Because teachers in these programs also teach in the "main school," their practices spread to other teachers. At Jeanne-Mance, too, there is more flexibility in instruction in special programs for potential dropouts and in welcome classes.

Teaching the "whole child" is the ideal in these schools, as well as teaching that motivates and instructs many different kinds of students. For the most part, teaching strategies are worked out by teachers in their classrooms, although collaborative relationships in the school and beyond it can encourage new approaches, support experiments, and provide feedback. Discussions about teaching strategies and approaches are more likely to occur when teachers work together and see each other's classes, but there are fewer opportunities for this than there might be.

Integration and Collaboration

In these case studies, integration of subjects and collaboration on instruction are found more frequently at alternative schools and among small groups in the large schools.

At Langley, subject integration is articulated as an ideal, but with a few exceptions, the school has not been able to break down traditional subject divisions. Integration takes extra effort, planning, curriculum development, and the co-ordination of teachers.

> *There are very different levels of input from people within the faculty. It's the same in any place that you teach. Some people are willing to work over and above their major job, and other people won't. They have other priorities. So those of us who have these ideas ... sometimes get a little frustrated that it isn't taken further.* (Teacher, Langley)

After describing some attempts at integration, another Langley teacher points to the priority of covering subject content:

> *It's hard to make physics artsy...In the humanities, they really try to integrate as much as they can. Sometimes you just can't do it. There's just too much to cover in the course.*

At Kildonan, a grant from a private charitable foundation encouraged planning and development of integrated science and vocational courses. The social studies department's interest in motivating students to read and write offers a model for interdepartmental collaboration on pedagogical issues. The traditional lines of distinction between departments, however, still exist.

> *We're not the English department. It would take a lot of energy for us to co-ordinate with ten English teachers who are ...in separate classrooms and are not necessarily philosophically in the same space as we are.* (Social studies teacher, Kildonan)

At Qitiqliq, some teachers are working on integrating curriculum at the junior secondary level, "so that at-risk students, poor attendees, and students with behavioural problems are not all in one group." The school staff were divided into three teams, which allowed students to move across grade levels. Teachers might teach two or three grade or course levels to the same group. This non-traditional organization still requires some work, and some parents are upset because children are not in a "grade." Integrated projects take up more periods in the Qitiqliq timetable than any single subject. Personal planning skills and decision-making is emphasized in integrated projects in the first year of junior secondary, and career planning towards the end of the second year. Other opportunities for integration are possible with the pending implementation of a new Innuqatigiit curriculum.

In large schools, integration across subject areas takes place in smaller programs and for younger students. At Vancouver Technical, an attempt to integrate core academic courses at the grade 8 level spurred discussion about combining English and social studies with humanities and math and science. After having experimented for two years, the school is now talking about integrating math and social studies instead, because it might pique girls' interest in math.

With funds from a provincial government initiative for technical education, Vancouver Technical has piloted an applied physics course that is a joint venture between technical studies and physics. Having received a site development grant, the school intends to place a computer-operated lathe in the metal-work shop. The science, computer science, and tech studies areas are working together, said an administrator, to "develop an integration of concepts. Because [the lathe] is computer-operated, computer science students may have an interest in seeing a direct application of their work with a machine that's right in the school."

At St. Benedict, greater integration has resulted from the creation of "villages" in grade 9. A reorganized timetable provides teachers with common planning time once a week. During the 1992-93 school year, the villages involved teachers from English, religion, history, and science. Working in small groups, they chose from a range of topics and developed projects in all four subject areas. During a two-week period, students worked in groups, with the teachers acting as facilitators. The subject-based timetable was suspended, and students had open access to the school library and technology resource centre. With teacher supervision, some groups went off campus for part of their investigations to places like municipal libraries and local industries. At the end of the unit, the projects were presented in a learning fair for teachers and parents. Teams of teachers and parents evaluated the projects.

During the 1993-94 school year, teachers in newly constituted villages (English, religion, history, and French) repeated the learning fair with modifications to improve student learning (such as a requirement to explore issues, not just present facts). The learning fair gave students a much larger than usual amount of choice and responsibility for their learning. For teachers, the experiment involved a shift from curriculum content coverage to outcomes, from subject to cross-disciplinary student evaluation, and from providing information to facilitating students to acquire information.

At Georges Vanier, many cross-curricular initiatives are developed individually and often informally, as teachers with similar interests form connections to enhance their programs. Often these connections are linked to extracurricular activities. For example, the year of our case study was the first year in many that Vanier produced a school show. The presentation of *The Wiz* involved many departments in addition to drama. Art students were responsible for set decoration and promotional designs; electronics students contributed to lighting, sound, and other special effects; and carpentry students were active in set-building and stage production. Several other initiatives are under way at the school.

> *I see integration happening with the activities of the Green Gang, which [has] an extracurricular project...with the North York Hospital. The school is landscaping the hospital's grounds....This required the technology department to communicate with the grounds department and get a city plan, bring it back to the school, and draw it into a computer-aided drafting program that was then rendered by the art department. Then the science and geography departments were involved with vegetation issues. So the project became cross-curricular.*
>
> *Broad-based technology is also doing a lot of [integrating]. For example, in desktop publishing there's a technical component, an English writing component, and a visual arts and graphic design component.* (Vice-principal, Georges Vanier).

But integration is difficult, as both the vice-principal and the principal pointed out.

> *Part of the difficulty we have is the structure of the present system and the school timetable.* (Vice-principal, Georges Vanier)
>
> *The subject areas work rather independently. We'd like to see them work in a more integrated manner, but this hasn't been the case in high schools in the past and it's difficult for subject areas to change their status. There has been some linking up in the technological studies area, but it's difficult to do [more of] this with the present segmented structure of the secondary school.* (Principal, Georges Vanier)

The integration of subjects requires teachers to break away from their subject orientation and work together across department lines. It changes working conditions, pedagogy, and curriculum. For some, it presents an exciting challenge; for others, it encroaches on the subject and personal boundaries that have been the basis of their expertise and autonomy.

Technology

Technology is both a subject to be taught and a medium of instruction that promises to provide students with multiple sources of knowledge. In so doing, it could change the role of the teacher from one who imparts knowledge to one who helps students make sense of it. In the schools in our study, the impact of technology is only beginning to be felt.

Technology is used to enhance instruction at several schools, while at others few students have access to any kind of computer technology. At Jeanne-Mance, several teachers have won awards for their innovative use of technology in the classroom. Computers are used much more in special classes at Jeanne-Mance than in the regular program. The language teacher uses them to give individual instruction to students at all levels so that his own time can be used more productively.

> *The computer looks after formal knowledge, the informational content offered to students, while the teacher is behind them to make them aware of the cognitive strategies and the metacognitive stress that play a part in learning. That's the aspect of my work that I find the most motivating....I think that should be a teacher's primary job — to look after the cognitive processes and strategies. In any case, that's what I try to do...except that we've not had much in the way of training. It's mostly through readings in cognitive psychology that I manage to develop these strategies. I think it's extremely beneficial.* (Teacher, Jeanne-Mance)

At Népisiguit, the introduction of a new technology lab involved visits to schools in both Canada and the United States to explore how it might best be used. All students must take an introductory technology course, taught in a laboratory equipped with computers set up for everything from photography to printing to mining. Students work as partners in a wide variety of modules. The course is very popular, and introduces students to working with computer technology in a wide variety of fields. Three science labs use computers, and the library is becoming more computerized. Computers are used increasingly by teachers to do their own work and record marks.

At Qitiqliq, electronic communication is very important for a school so far from other English-language resources. The ability to use technology is highly valued and required of all students. The school hired a teacher with an extensive knowledge of computers, and he has been able to introduce several courses, which all students take for credit. Inuktitut software has been developed.

Georges Vanier, well known for its use of technology, exemplifies the potential inherent in using technology in schools. Four years ago, a staff committee decided that telecommunications would provide a unique focus for the school, and today Vanier is considered a leading school for computer technology in Ontario. It has about 500 microcomputers and an internal school network that allows administrators, teachers, and students to communicate by modem about numerous social and curricular aspects of life, in the school and elsewhere. The network provides information via electronic bulletin boards, e-mail messages for individuals, and computer conferences open to all who log on to the system. Special education students use the network extensively. Some students communicate from home with their teachers by using a modem, some check homework that way, others get caught up on work they miss because of illness. Technology also connects the school through network systems to other local, national, and international computer users. For example, elementary students send in questions about science to senior students at Georges Vanier, who research them and respond.

The technological studies department engages in extensive, broad-based technology integration across its curriculum. As well as the computer studies department and the telecommunications centre, other departments (business, special education, science, English, co-op) integrate computer technology into their programs. Several computer labs are scattered throughout the school — the resource centre and the learning centre house several computers, as do departmental offices. Facilities for CD-ROM use are also available. Macintosh- and IBM-based hardware and software are used. Video technology is starting to become integrated with computers. Students doing science experiments use the technology. Simple word processing and the more advanced desktop publishing are used across the curriculum.

> *My main concern is to integrate the school and break down the boundaries in subject areas...subjects are arbitrary anyway...all knowledge is a global thing and we must completely*

> *get out of this old industrial model and into a project-based curriculum that's real-world-focused and student-driven with teachers as facilitators. I hope I have a career long enough to realize it because I've been working on it for ten years already.* (Telecommunications centre head, Georges Vanier)

> *What we have here gives the kids virtually an electronic high school that doesn't recognize walls and buildings and the colour of people's skin and all the other realities that can get in the way of people co-operating and communicating with each other. It's very exciting.* (Teacher, Georges Vanier)

The different uses to which technology can be put are evident at Georges Vanier. Its *Pathfinder* lab is a computer-managed — rather than a computer-based — program that allows students to work independently, at their own pace. It provides personalized contact with one teacher in calm surroundings, although not a lot of peer interaction. In 1993-94, the *Pathfinder* lab served 25 students taking credit courses, 43 students who needed extra help, and 36 co-op students. Electronic bulletin boards provide information well beyond the scope of any school library. Through the Internet system, Vanier gains access to a worldwide network that includes public databases. Vanier is also a charter member of the first National Network for Learning in Canada. To date, this network, initiated at the North York Board of Education, links eight school boards from five provinces, three post-secondary institutions, and 11 private-sector organizations. According to the director of education, "this network will enable students across Canada to access curriculum in mathematics and science through innovative information technology."

Some teachers at Georges Vanier express their enthusiasm for the new technology, while others resist it. Several note there is a need for more professional development on computer awareness. "When you have a group of non-users and you want to turn them into users, one afternoon isn't going to do it," said a business teacher. The head of the telecommunications centre provides interested teachers with opportunities to develop both their knowledge and comfort levels. He also trains students to go into classes and teach others how to use computers and the internal networking systems. A computer advisory committee meets weekly to enhance and encourage the use of the technology.

In most of the other schools in this study, little technology is evident, and what does exist is marginal to mainstream schooling. Computer technology is expensive for schools like Peguis or Grandy's River, schools that could perhaps benefit most. It is difficult to integrate at Jeanne-Mance, where innovations in mathematics and language software programs by teachers are not used outside of remedial instruction, even though the teachers responsible for their development have received national awards At Vancouver Technical, it is routine for students to take computer courses or keyboarding, but they do not use the equipment in most of their subjects.

Although communications technology offers possibilities for changing pedagogy, it has not been integrated into the life and learning style of most schools. Surprising numbers of educational leaders — school administrators and teachers — admit casually and without embarrassment they "know nothing about computers." In some schools, computer labs are an add-on to the regular program, an extra facility used for a special course in computer literacy; rarely are computers integrated into the teaching of English or social studies. Where integration does take place, it is mostly in fields out of the mainstream — second language for immigrants, technology courses, business and vocational courses. Even the schools in this study, all generally well-regarded, seem surprisingly low-tech except where there is a techno-enthusiast on staff. The expense, the learning teachers need to do, and the challenge to traditional pedagogy all make it difficult to incorporate new technology into teaching. There is a danger that the imaginative and critical use of technology may become a new source of division between good schools and poor schools, and between affluent and poor communities.

Concluding Comments: A Reflective Community

After completing an analysis of these schools, one of the researchers concluded that they are "exemplary" because they

> *inspire devotion and loyalty in teachers and students, have leaders who express a need for partnership and nurturance, see teacher satisfaction as critical to the smooth functioning of*

> *the school, and are respectful of students. Good schools struggle with and recognize imperfection, and link community with constructive self-criticism.*

The schools in this study evidence both debate and co-operation, balancing respect for teachers' professional autonomy with the need for collaboration among teachers and accountability to a larger public. Too much like-mindedness prevents self-criticism; too much diversity of purpose leads to fragmentation and isolation.

Resolving tensions varies from school to school. In schools with a clearly defined mission — be it fine arts, Catholicism, Aboriginal education, or a second chance for students — a framework exists in which to resolve disputes. In small communities, agreement about a framework is implicit. In large, heterogeneous schools, like Centennial, debates can be resolved by a strong leader who has the support of the community. More often they are resolved across the school as a whole, with small groups within the school developing their own collective purposes and sense of solidarity and initiative.

Policy must take into account the centrality of teachers to educational change. Unless teachers are engaged in the discussions and in making policy meaningful in their classrooms, policy change will stay at the level of rhetoric and documents. Significant change cannot be imposed by a government, a principal, or a parent; it must involve teachers collaborating, discussing, trying out new things, and reporting back about them. Teachers who feel confident are more likely to take risks. Teachers exposed to new ideas and new practices are more likely to have something worthwhile to try out.

Constructive self-criticism and reflection is an informal process, one that has been described as part of the "culture" of a school. It can be improved dramatically, however, by linking it with people and ideas outside the school and by an environment that rewards successful practices instead of criticizing teachers and putting them on the defensive.

Chapter 8

Connections with a Larger World

THAT SCHOOLS are not self-contained communities is the premise of this study. Earlier chapters have explored how context makes a difference to concepts of success, to curriculum, to students, and to teachers. The larger community depends on its schools for the education of a new generation, and schools depend on the community for funding, support, and the intellectual and moral authority on which it bases its program. To respond effectively to students, educators need to understand what families value, how they approach school, and what they want out of it. The value of the school's credentials ultimately depends on the judgements of those outside the schools.

This chapter looks at the mechanisms that link schools to the larger community. These linkages provide a voice for those in the community while recognizing that educators are professionals with specialized knowledge and a particular job to do. They need respect for their expertise and understanding of students, and room for independent judgement if they are to perform with confidence and energy. They also must be aware of and responsive to the larger world from which students come, and to which they return as full participants soon after they leave.

The appropriate relations between the inside and the outside, between the autonomy and professional knowledge of teachers and the demands for accountability and involvement of the larger community, shape many of the major policy debates about schools. Some argue that schools should be more open, reaching out more, bringing in more, breaking down the walls. Others see schools as a place of refuge from the larger community, kept appropriately apart, with a specific role to play. For still others, schools are a place from which to engage in social change. Schools try to find forms of organization that permit sharing information, allow appropriate latitude to educators, develop the interest and support of the local community, encourage lively debate and renewal, and ensure accountability in the long run to a larger public. This challenge is shared by many other publicly funded institutions staffed by professionals.

Schools that try to ignore external demands will have limited success in the long run and, in the short run, cut themselves off from sources of renewal and support. Deliberately or not, communities have an impact on their schools. The examples are many. The end of cod fishing in Newfoundland created uncertainty for graduates of Grandy's River. Changes in the fortunes of steel mills and union traditions in Cape Breton as well as the increased voice of the Native community have provided challenges for Sydney Academy. Changes in housing values and immigration patterns have reconstituted the student bodies at Georges Vanier and Vancouver Technical and changed what parents expect. Ontario government legislation changed the funding for and enrolment in Catholic schools like St. Benedict and Pain Court. Language legislation in Quebec dramatically increased the number of non-French-speaking students who attend Jeanne-Mance.

When the social and political environments of a school change, disruptions are created, but so are opportunities. There is plenty of scope for creativity, conflict, or a renewed collective effort. Leadership, communication, information and resources become critical to how schools respond, as does the support of the external policy environment. The ability of many of these schools to plan, mobilize resources, and be creative under conditions of change is what sets them apart. Some argue they have not changed enough, remaining largely bureaucratic, industrial organizations where students still sit in classrooms attending discrete courses in 50-minute periods. Others believe that change has disrupted the core academic culture and the discipline that used to prevail. These case studies let us see what has happened in a few schools, and why.

This chapter discusses how the schools relate to their larger communities. It deals first with parents, the primary external audience for schools. It then turns to other non-governmental groups that connect to schools, looking at how the connections work and what they bring to the school. The chapter then addresses the issue of the roles of provincial, district, and school-based decision making. Finally, it turns to the mechanisms that provide choice for parents about the secondary schooling of their children, exploring ways in which different kinds of communities have a choice in the schools to which they send their children.

Parental Involvement

Parents are not present in the day-to-day world of secondary school, but they are concerned with what happens there. A substantial body of research suggests students do better when their parents are involved with their education (Epstein, 1987, 1990), helping with homework, visiting the school, staying informed or getting involved in parent committees and meetings. Such parental involvement has tended to be in elementary schools, for secondary students are not anxious to have their parents involved. In several provinces, school legislation requires a parent consultative committee for each school.

The secondary schools in this study say they want parent involvement, although they define it in different ways. They have parent nights and committees for meeting parents; they phone and meet parents when students are in trouble. In some communities, school staff wonder why parents do not participate more. At the same time, schools protect their boundaries in many ways. Relationships with parents are complicated by differences in social class, language, culture, and expectations.

Relationships with parents are easier in small, homogeneous communities where values are shared. New Norway, of all the schools in our study, comes closest to this. The principal works without written rules and talks individually to every parent with a concern. He is anxious not to expand the school, not just because there is no space in the building, but because he would no longer have personal contact with each family.

Yet even here, relations with parents are handled carefully. Parents who have concerns do not talk to teachers directly. The principal sees his role as protecting the teachers and ensuring he knows about and mediates those important relations. Teachers have come to appreciate his approach.

> *...My attitude was if I have a parent who has a problem with me, I want to know about it. Now I'm more...aware of the fact that if there's some little problem, I don't need to be worrying about [it]. There have been times when [the principal] has said, "I've got this concern. This parent came and what do you think?" But you've got a buffer....Teachers can be very paranoid. You've got the kids, you always have the principal evaluating whether or not you are doing a good job. You've got the parents... hearing what the kids are saying. And when you don't have to worry about those things...it gives you a lot more physical as well as emotional energy to deal with kids.*
> (Teacher, New Norway)

New Norway has no collective group of parents to provide input. All concerns are handled through the administrators, giving them considerable control but also responsibility.

At Peguis, parent-teacher relations are well developed, although a community workshop held as part of our study recommended that a Parent-Teacher Association be formed. Parents wanted more input into program and course offerings, curriculum development, and policy making, and it was thought an association would encourage parent involvement in decision-making. To make parents feel more comfortable about meetings at the school, the school organizes a flea market before every meeting and door prizes and raffles are common. The vice-principal says that this makes more people feel free to bring their concerns to the school.

Appalaches is also situated in a stable community where teachers' relations with parents have been forged over many years; in fact, some teachers have taught the parents of their present students. The Quebec government requires parent advisory committees and, at Appalaches, good relations with parents in the school committee and guidance council are described as a key to the school's success.

The principal describes the process of bringing about change at the school:

> *You go to meet with your director of education and your superintendent of instruction to make sure they understand your plan. It's also necessary to sensitize the parents, primarily through the school committee and the guidance council. That's not a problem, but it does mean that you have to invest a lot of time.* (Principal, Appalaches)

Individual relations between parents and teachers are central to the success of this school.

> *This supervision is facilitated by the fact that the teachers know the parents (often they have taught them or they are teaching their own children or their wives teach with them). These people all live in the same neighbourhoods, in the same villages; they run into one another in grocery and corner stores, at Sunday Mass. The students don't see the teachers just at school; in fact, there is almost continual contact ....The fact that everyone knows everyone else creates great pressure for excellence, as is indicated by what one teacher said: "The school staff are a part of the community; you don't have the right to fail — you have to be good. This pressure is felt by the students as well: they know that people stick together and that they talk among themselves."* (Principal, Appalaches)

The teachers look to the parents when they need help with a discipline problem or when they think the student needs support. The parents seem very supportive of the school.

At Népisiguit, relations between parents and the school are also mentioned as important for success. Parents raise money and support the school. In 1993-94 there was no formally constituted parent body, although provincial regulations are changing to mandate a council that includes parent representatives. The case study on this school reported that several people, especially parents, say that they lack information about the curriculum, student activities, and scholarships and feel that parents are not really "witnesses to what's happening at school; they aren't in the know about what's going on other than in the academic area." Other parents "presume that everything's going well at school because their children are happy, but they admit that they don't really know what's happening."

Some of the teaching staff also emphasize that "Some parents show ignorance (for which they are not necessarily responsible) about the school system and seem to have abandoned, to some extent, their own responsibility for their children's education. Other teachers affirm the opposite, "Parents have a lot of faith in the school, as if they know that we're doing a good job. If something does go wrong, they won't hesitate to contact the school."

At Grandy's River, there is more separation between school and parents. The school is there to educate, and parents do not feel they have the knowledge or experience to give advice. Parents say they don't want control over curriculum. They believe that curriculum matters are best left to teachers and education officials. But they urge their children to stay in school. However, without mechanisms for parent involvement in the school system, the onus for maintaining a high quality of education falls squarely on the local school board and the school personnel. Parents place "immense trust" in the Newfoundland Department of Education and Training and the school board, believing that the school will provide students with the best education. Although a few better informed parents may question this trust, parents generally do not see themselves as having a decision-making role in school curriculum or policies.

In Qitiqliq, the tensions are magnified by more differences between teachers and parents: differences in language, culture, history, and expectations about the future. When the concept of "rules" is unfamiliar to Inuit students, and discipline is handled quite differently in the two cultures, the process of developing understanding between home and school demands time, respect, and learning on both sides. Teachers arrive in the school from the south and usually stay only a few years. They are university-educated and do not speak Inuktitut, but most parents speak only Inuktitut and have never attended secondary school. Teachers deliver report cards to students' homes if parents do not come to the school to parent-teacher interviews to collect them. These meetings are not easy. Frequently teachers need interpreters to accompany them. The school has a Community Education Committee (CEC), one of whose roles is to inform and communicate with parents. According to the principal, "If there is a problem with the school, some parents will call the CEC rather than the school." In addition to the CEC, there is a Community Planning Committee that tries to involve the community in education. It established a buddy system in which local families "adopt" a new teacher. The vice-principal stated that "the aim is to have parents take ownership of the school as a place where their goals for their children can be met, and where teachers and parents work together to facilitate this aim."

Langley Fine Arts School is small and located in a relatively well-off community where almost everyone speaks English. Parents choose to send their children here and are closely involved in their school work. There is a formal parents' advisory committee, and parental involvement on school committees of many kinds. Teachers do not get a high turnout for parent-teacher nights when students' progress is discussed, but a significant group of parents discuss the budget, admissions, curriculum, discipline, and the mission of the school. They are not hesitant to meet with ministry officials and the superintendent when they have a concern.

> *The parent advisory council at our school is one of the strongest that I have ever had the honour of associating with. They're keen...very solid, well-trained, well-prepared with a supportive mentality. You can't beat that.* (Principal, Langley)

Parents' input is valued at Langley; they lobby for the school and raise its profile in many ways. For the teachers and administrators, though, this involvement is not always positive. Parents put "tremendous pressure on the school" in many ways. They pushed to add a gifted program, for example, when several parents were on the executive of the gifted children's association. They question the open admissions policy and the timetable.

> *We're under scrutiny. They (parents) want to know if what we're saying is really working...and they want to know if they've made the right decision in putting Sally or Johnny here.* (Teacher, Langley)

Although this pressure is important for the success of the school, it is often stressful and sometimes pushes the school in directions that conflict with board policy.

In large and diverse communities, and in poorer communities, the problems of parent participation are different. At Georges Vanier, it was hard for the researchers to find parents with whom to talk. The principal comments, "They don't like to phone, and they prefer to let the school deal with situations that arise." This leaves room for teacher autonomy, but teachers often want parent support.

> *It's a real challenge. We have a lot of difficulty getting parents out to meetings, particularly for the parent association meetings. The parents will come out when it's a parents' night, if all the teachers are here....But if you call a meeting you get very few parents, even though we have a telephone campaign, we send out flyers, we advertise as much as possible, the response is still not good. We may try an idea that's been used in other schools: make it more of a social gathering.* (Teacher, Georges Vanier)

Consultation in this school demands particular sensitivity, as well as resources, for communications must be translated into several languages. Building trust in the face of racism, diversity and anger is no easy task. A former principal discussed how he tried to build trust by inviting representatives of various racial and ethnic organizations to meet with him to address issues of academic performance, failure rates, and behaviour problems. He described this attempt as a disaster, because he was the one to define the problem, and, as a result, the representatives refused to work with the school. The episode was a learning experience for the principal. Subsequently, the community was approached in a more consultative way by responding to community-defined concerns and introducing programs that would enable more students, especially those of ethnic and racial minorities identified as disadvantaged, to experience success.

Balfour Collegiate, too, recognizes that some parents are less comfortable than others in dealing with the school. One teacher believed that the school had to attempt to encourage Aboriginal parents to become involved in the school, and the vice-principal spoke at length of the difficulty of a mother who, for economic reasons, could not get involved.

> *I've one student that probably might discontinue right now... [and who] hadn't shown up for a long time. I couldn't phone home. I finally sent a letter... [saying] "We need you to come to school, we need to hear from you....Finally the kid shows up, and I say, "You know you've missed so many classes, you've been away for so long, I'm going to need to meet with*

> *your parents also: I want them in on it so that I can see a commitment, right?" These people don't have a phone. The next day I got a phone call from the mother...from a pay phone...she wants him to come to school and says, "I can't come, sorry I'm sick and I can't afford it. I said, "Okay, can you please sit down and talk with your son? We need...commitment and maybe write me a letter."*
>
> *The kid came in the next day with a beautiful letter, from the mother, who had sat down with that kid. I'm not sure we're going to be able to keep him. He's worried also; says the police are after him and if he comes to school, they'll find him here. I don't know how much is his imagination, because I haven't had the police banging down my doors about this student.* (Vice-principal, Balfour Collegiate)

Vancouver Technical also encounters problems in involving parents. The researchers found they could make contact with parents of students in the more advanced academic programs (French immersion, Summit, Flex) but not with other parents. One teacher said, "When we have parent meetings, you can sit here all night, and [only] one parent will come by." Two provincially mandated "community action days" were poorly attended. A parent comments, "This is a working area, and people work hard, and I don't think that they have the energy." Added another, "It would be advantageous for me and other parents to get more involved, but I'm not going to because I have too many other commitments right now and find that I do not have the time." Mothers are the parents most often involved, and they are busy working outside the home as well as in it.

Coming to meetings is only one kind of parental involvement, however, and not the kind seen as most critical.

> *What do we want parents to do? ...we want them to be supportive of the school's efforts to educate their children. We want them to provide quiet places for students to do homework — a supportive environment where there's parent supervision...that parents talk to their kids about what they're learning in school, let them know that school's important.* (Administrator, Vancouver Technical)

Parents who do not speak English have difficulty helping their children with homework, as do those who work in the evenings. Many parents feel that it is the teachers' job to teach, not the parents' job. Said one, "I think if you really trust the teacher, you trust them enough to leave them alone." Some parents only expect to be called into the school when there is a problem; some teachers agree.

> *I guess the contact I have with the families is sort of the negative side of things.... I can have a kid on the honour roll for five years and maybe never need to meet the parent at all.* (Teacher, Vancouver Technical)

Conflicting expectations result in poor communication. Some people even see the school as hostile to parental involvement.

> *There's a philosophy that parents are not to enter the high school. And teachers encourage this attitude of being embarrassed that your parents are in the high school. ...I think it's dangerous...and it's sad too...because the perception is, "Your parent is your enemy, you can't go to them for help."* (Parent, Vancouver Technical)

The lack of parental involvement is clearest at Contact, which serves older, often homeless youth. The numbers are staggering. Nine per cent of students in the Toronto Board live on their own. Another 16 per cent live apart from their parents. Fifty-six per cent of Contact students live on their own. Many come from abusive families, not the nurturing ideal for parent involvement. Under conditions like this, involvement with other community groups and service agencies connects the school with the needs of its students. Here streetworkers are part of the staff. The line between what the school does and what others do for students is blurred.

> *I got kicked out of the house when I was 16 ; I was living on the street and I was going to Anonymous Secondary but they didn't want me any more. They said they couldn't help me with welfare, and they couldn't help me to get to school. ...They told me to find an alternative school, so I came here. They fed me here....I needed it.* (Student, Contact)

Teachers see their role as personal, "from the heart," far more than a nine-to-five job. This school says, "We are the free winter coat program for those who are cold." It provides food every day, and shelter at Contact House for six students. It helps with welfare, daycare, getting students to school in the morning, and counselling. Here the school acts *in loco parentis* in ways that would be unacceptable and impossible elsewhere. Instead of meeting with parents, teachers meet and plan programs together with streetworkers.

Parental involvement comes in a variety of forms. Parents have different resources, capacities and interests, all of which affect their interactions with the school. Schools both encourage and limit involvement, pushing for more where parents seem not to be supportive enough, limiting and controlling when the demands could be disruptive. Students' success depends, at least partly, on what parents do — feeding, talking, encouraging them at home. Although schools reach out to do this for students, there is no getting around the fact that parents who do less of it, for whatever reasons, have children who struggle more in school. Teachers want students to succeed and are concerned that parents play their part. This leads to overtures to parents, parent councils and some involvement of parents in decision making at schools. At the same time, there is a line that schools protect, a sphere where parents do not necessarily know best. "Protection" from "interference" coexists with encouraging involvement, a fine line that each school community walks differently.

Partnerships

It is not just parents that schools call on for support. Businesses, community groups, and social service agencies are increasingly working with schools to provide information, resources, services and learning experiences that would not otherwise be available to students. And it is not just parents who are calling for more involvement in and impact on schools. Other groups want a say in what schools do, although there are even fewer models of how they might work with schools consistently, productively, and with appropriate give-and-take over issues of responsibility and power.

Social service agencies and schools forge partnerships that are critical to some students, especially those at risk of not succeeding. Some of these have been discussed earlier. The involvement of streetworkers at Contact, the teen moms program at Balfour, the community liaison and other support personnel and services at Georges Vanier, and the various programs at Joe Duquette all bring social services to students in their secondary school. Providing services at the school serves adolescents well. At the same time, such partnerships make school life more complex. At a school like Vancouver Technical, short-term funding for many special programs, turnover of staff, and the necessity of sharing information expand the responsibilities and the potential headaches for school personnel.

Private philanthropic organizations are playing a large part in school reform efforts in the United States, but this study found little evidence of such support for Canadian schools. The one example was in Manitoba, where the Walter and Duncan Gordon Charitable Foundation has undertaken to support school reforms for students at risk and for integrating academic and technical programs at Kildonan East. This endeavour was particularly valuable because the process of preparing an application for funding involved planning and meetings with experts outside the school. This helped develop teachers' ideas of what kind of intervention would be appropriate, as well as providing the resources to put it in place.

Many schools are also working more closely than they used to with employers. The career days, co-op programs and work experiences discussed under vocational programs would not be possible without employer involvement. An example of the resources such involvement can produce is found at Népisiguit. Here a major effort in partnership with local businesses, especially Brunswick Mining, has resulted in the establishment of a new technology lab with 30 learning modules used by 60 grade 10 students every semester in their introductory technology course. The computer-based modules are mini-laboratories using equipment donated by local businesses. Some simulate mining processes, while others involve photography and publishing. The classrooms were renovated, and teachers devoted extra time to designing, organizing, and setting up the equipment. The case study report on this school states: "The recent opening ceremony was attended by the province's Premier and Minister of Education, who look on the laboratory as a shining example of partnership between a school and its community....A teacher reports...the failure rate among students taking the new modular course this year (1993-1994) was 0.5 per cent compared to 12 per cent the previous year." The new lab has raised the prestige of technology studies among students and the reputations of the businesses involved.

The school will soon have its own closed-circuit television network. Televisions donated by the local McDonald's restaurant have been placed in the cafeteria and can be used to advertise local jobs, inform students of forthcoming school activities, and show short programs developed by students in the technology lab.

At Népisiguit, change has not come without some tension. Areas of the school curriculum that have not been the recipients of new resources (or have not taken the initiative in the same way, depending on one's point of view) wonder about the priority placed on technology and the neglect of other areas. However, working with its community has elevated Népisiguit from a school like most others to one that stands out.

At Hartland, McCain's, by far the most important local business, has worked with the Department of Education and other businesses to sponsor the "Academic League," a twice-yearly academic competition among six schools. The League, developed about five years ago, has become popular. The partnership, which involves sponsoring an out-of-school activity, is one that teachers and students embrace wholeheartedly.

> *It's a big hit in the schools. The kids want to be in the Academic League. It's highly publicized; we put it in the paper. Parents come in and watch the competitions. The social studies competition would usually be a Jeopardy or Reach for the Top format — that's quite exciting. The art competitions produce some very beautiful work in music and drama. We also do computers, physics, chemistry, French, physical education.... We've also sent our at-risk kids. One was sent to the shop program. He might have been at risk, but he can take cars apart. We put him in the automotive [program] and he did very well.* (Teacher, Hartland)

> *It's a great way to bring the community in, seeing smart kids in operation. It's been a real stimulus for encouraging kids to get recognition for being bright and preparing them with the idea that, for people who are ambitious, there are going to be rewards.* (Teacher, Hartland)

Sydney Academy also has developed close relations with the local community. Many local entrepreneurs are alumni, imbued with "Academy Pride." The school has an annual recognition night for employers who provide work placements for its careers program. It collects scholarship money for students going on to university.

> *One of the aspects of my job as principal that I loved very much was the scholarships. We would collect money from the people in the area starting in January. They published a little booklet. I called it the Academy Awards. It lists all the people, the amount awarded and the donor. When we send out the initial letter in the spring, I send a copy of that booklet to the people, so they see their name and they think, "I better keep it there." It's amazing how many people contribute to the scholarships. ...People give us an annual donation, and we acknowledge it by calling it by the name of the company. A lot of people have left us money in their wills.* (Former principal, Sydney Academy)

At Balfour, partnerships are also a priority with board members and they see the public relations aspect of them.

> *I think ...having your community know what is happening in your schools, and the school reaching out to the community ...is good...you know the opportunities for students, using the Art Gallery, job shadowing, and... SaskPower's [contribution]...we should do more and more of that.* (School trustee, Balfour Collegiate)

Arviat, the location of Qitiqliq Secondary School, is both small (1,325 people in a hamlet the size of a few city blocks), and complex, and has two language and cultural communities with two different experiences of the school system. The Qablunaat (English-speaking, from the south) community dominates the school district staff, the school staff, and the business partnerships. The Inuit are the students, the parents, and the political majority in the Keewatin Divisional Board of Education and in the territorial government.

Although these divisions might be expected to make communication and partnership difficult, Qitiqliq received an award from the Conference Board of Canada for its partnerships. The school's soapstone carving project is an example of how well these relationships work. In 1993, community members and teachers collaborated in a proposal for soapstone-carving education. This project was meant to reflect the traditional skills and crafts of the Inuit. It has several phases: small project development, carving production, and marketing. In the first phase, junior secondary classes identify and prepare for market one new product line each school year. Telemarketing is also being explored with the help of NorthwesTel.

At a Community Planning Committee meeting, the principal, vice-principal, community economic development officer, and the owner of a construction company that is the largest private-sector source of employment in Arviat focused on a construction technology course they thought was needed. They discussed start-up time, possible co-operation with the Department of Public Works, obtaining materials, and looking elsewhere for partners and seed money. The school's co-op program places students in local businesses and hires Elders to teach about the traditional ways of living on the land. Practical skills are taught in the enterprise and innovation and wildlife management programs. These links are central to making Qitiqliq a school that works.

Partnerships acquaint teachers with the needs and experience of students and parents and provide students with diverse experiences. However, a more open school means more conflicts to resolve, more bases to touch, when decisions are made. More powerful community groups are the ones more likely to involve themselves with the school. At a time when resources are scarce, teachers and administrators must evaluate the "payoff" of such partnerships and judge how much the curriculum and timetable will be improved or disrupted. The benefits of a more open school are also clear. The expansion of horizons, resources, and connections with a world that is larger than a school building are critical for education.

Centralization and Decentralization: Relations among Jurisdictions

Demands for increased local autonomy are common, not just in schools but in all public services. The impetus is the result partly of a realization of how unwieldy and unresponsive centrally controlled bureaucracies can be, partly the recognition of the effectiveness of small, responsive programs (Fine, 1994). Wehlage *et al* (1989), for example, in an influential study of programs for at-risk youth, recommended that "state and local policy should encourage the decentralization of large schools and school systems, creating smaller units characterized by site-based management." The recommendation reflects Wehlage's admiration of the innovative and effective programs he found across the United States. At the same time, the common good must be protected through public regulation and equity must be ensured across the system.

Responsibility for different kinds of decisions in educational matters is distributed among different levels of government. Curriculum and funding policies are generally made at the provincial level, hiring is done at the district level, and timetables and staffing are handled by the school. Authority over schooling is always balanced among elected provincial governments, locally elected school boards, and parents, teachers, and students. Considerable variation exists among the schools in this study in where decisions are made and, ultimately, in how much control schools exercise over their own practice. Curriculum is more decentralized in Ontario. The Montreal Catholic School Commission is relatively centralized. Langley Fine Arts School, and the alternative schools, emphasize school-based management. There is no single model of what works.

Quebec schools are subject to the most elaborate regulation at the provincial level through the "régime pédagogique," the result of a particular set of historical circumstances. The Parent report in 1964 marked the Quiet Revolution, the beginning of a public, though confessional, school system and the creation of the ministry of education. The ensuing couple of decades of difficult labour relations between the teachers' union and the ministry confirmed a centralized system of bargaining and administration.

The Quebec Ministry of Education advanced the centralizing process through funding and controlling the costs of education, establishing budgeting rules and salary scales, defining a "régime pédagogique" for all schools, overhauling the curriculum and introducing obligatory provincial examinations at the secondary level. In the space of a few decades, the Quebec education system went from being scattered and dislocated in the early 1960s to being one of the most structured and centralized in North America.

Curriculum content and its objectives in core subject areas, such as mathematics, sciences, and social studies, is specified in detail by the ministry. The curriculum for English-language arts, moral and religious education, and physical education is less detailed, has fewer objectives, and offers teachers more flexibility for individual initiatives and innovations. The provincial government examines students in many subject areas, and publishes the results. Despite the centralization, boards and schools are allowed some flexibility.

> *For instance, in curriculum and course design, school boards and schools can develop the grid of common curriculum subjects as well as the courses and their content. They can also create their own curriculum and courses. Thus school boards and schools in Quebec differ from one another — they can adapt programs to meet the needs of exceptional students as well as the successful ones.* (Case study, Les Etchemins)

Both Appalaches and Etchemins pride themselves on the ways they have adapted the provincial program. At Centennial also, the sense that the school can make a difference, start its own programs, and be distinctive animates educators.

Although the French-speaking system in New Brunswick has some similarities with the Quebec system, at Népisiguit, the researchers found that "the administration has greater autonomy and freedom; the district authorities have confidence in the planning and policies and is very proud of the school's evolution and reputation."

Even in provinces where provincial regulation is looser, schools struggle for more autonomy. At Sydney Academy, staff members feel they are being put into a position where they have to manipulate to keep themselves within the parameters established by the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Culture, and yet still offer the programs they consider valid. The school talks of offering unique programs "although technically we're not permitted to." Tension exists between the school's sense that it knows what is best for its students, and regulations that come from Halifax, particularly ones that would decrease streaming and allow other schools to offer prestigious academic programs like French immersion.

Provincial governments can influence school practices in positive ways by providing resources for fresh initiatives rather than regulating closely. Ontario's funding for the Transition Years for destreaming grade 9 allowed St. Benedict and Pain Court to try some new programs for dropouts and to link up with their feeder elementary schools. The New Brunswick Department of Education funds for technology allowed Népisiguit to develop its technology lab. Jeanne-Mance used provincial funds for its welcome classes. British Columbia's Skills Now program provides funds for Vancouver Technical's applied academics program. The schools in this study take advantage of provincial funding opportunities to develop new programs.

Ontario has less directive provincial guidelines, administers no province-wide exams (although it carried out its first province-wide testing in the year of this study), and encourages local curriculum development, allowing school boards to take on more of the functions performed by a ministry elsewhere. The Toronto Board of Education, for example, has curriculum guidelines and resource materials to encourage schools to include social issues in and across the curriculum. Although teachers at the alternative schools respect the curriculum guidelines provided by the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training and the Toronto Board of Education, they interpret them liberally.

> *There are definite parameters of program that must be uniformly applied in all our schools and they are defined by ministry guidelines and they set out certain contents, obligatory matters and certain issues and skills and awareness that you must build into your program. The manner in which you do it is a professional matter. We encourage schools to design program structures that incorporate those minimum expectations...others that work and are as current as possible are in the alternative schools...they have been most successful in working within those parameters to develop an integrated model because they haven't got the room to do everything individually in a solo approach. They don't have an English Department...they've got English intertwined with everything else so that they can do an integrated model and it works very well, so we look with favour on creativity in how you deliver it.* (Curriculum superintendent, Toronto Board, about Contact)

The Toronto Board has allowed a great deal of autonomy to its alternative schools. Teachers, streetworkers and office staff at Contact make the decisions that support the day-to-day running of the school and will shape the future. A group of teachers "persuaded" the school board to grant space and a telephone, and proceeded with "wresting authority and power from those external to the school." The school continues to see itself as on the "outside," distrustful of the central administration. By and large the board does not intervene in the school's affairs. However, staffing regulations negotiated at the board level significantly constrain the school in hiring, and board curriculum and budget policies have a major influence on what happens.

> *There's no provision in either the Education Act or the Teaching Profession Act for what alternative schools do and how they function. If someone says, "Look the teaching assignment that I have been given. . . is contrary to the federation rules," and goes to the federation, you've got a problem because you have to deal with that. . . we have to work out some kind of compromise and usually we do this on an ad hoc basis. . . each separately. Frankly, I find it a pain in the neck because I wish there were some . . . recognition that alternative schools don't function in the way regular schools do.* (Staff member, Corktown)

Some school boards are working to increase the autonomy of the schools for which they are responsible. School-based management or budgeting, which encourages schools to make their own decisions in program and budgeting, is a popular school reform. The Langley school board has made significant moves in this direction.

> *I believe clearly in moving the decisions as much as is possible to the people that obviously have the most information in order to make the decisions. And that obviously involves some trust that the people in the schools and that the people that have the information are, in fact, motivated to make the best decision. . . . So, if you have some faith in them. . . you should allow them to be able to make decisions.* (Superintendent, Langley)

Langley controls its budget for staffing and some capital expenses, which allows it to decide how much staff time will be spent on which activities. Significant discussion about the budget takes place at the school.

> *We heard submissions from everybody from the custodial staff, who told us they were going nuts because they were having a hard time controlling the dust, to other people who said the musical literature they are working with now is beneath them and ...requested $20,000 worth of instruments. The committee sits and listens politely to all the submissions and then starts prioritizing. I let it have a free hand. Of course, I'm there for the discussions and I steer. If I see something gets a little more of a play than it should, then I'll try and put that in perspective. But I do listen to that group very carefully. They make recommendations and I compile a budget. I sit there and try to make the thing balance.* (Principal, Langley)

The system is not popular with everyone. It requires developing more accounting expertise at the school. And although the school can make staffing and curriculum decisions, these are constrained significantly by district-wide agreements about staffing ratios, working conditions, and curriculum directions. The British Columbia Teachers' Federation representative argues that, although the system seems to shift responsibility to the school from the district, and, thus, make the school responsible, most of the important decisions can still not be made at the school.

The most independent board is Peguis. Until 1976, Peguis was run by the federal government through the Department of Indian Affairs, which adopted the federal policy, *Indian Control of Indian Education*, in 1973. This policy originated in the concerns of parents in particular and Aboriginal educators and political leaders in general for the academic failure and sense of alienation experienced by their children in both federal and provincial schools. Increased parental responsibility and involvement, more First Nations teachers, more accurate and appropriate Native content, and more cultural education for non-Native teachers were envisioned.

> *The transition to local band control was difficult at first ... it was hard for the teachers at the school to accept that the Indian people were going to be running their education system. It was hard for them to see that we were capable, that we had the energy, that we had the qualifications and the experience to set up the education system. And our biggest struggle was with non-Native teachers.* (Board official, Peguis)

> *What has happened is that the government has simply said, "Well, here's your school, you run it." Without any kind of developmental process, it causes havoc, and, of course, it's the kids that suffer in the long run for it. So if we keep in mind that the basic job to do here is to educate kids, and whatever you decide — whatever policies and philosophies you adopt — go along remembering that, then you can't go far wrong.* (Superintendent, Peguis)

The effects were a dramatic increase in local pride and involvement in the school. There was less outside influence on what was done. Most non-Native teachers "had to go find other jobs elsewhere," and the provincial government resources for supporting the curriculum were no longer available to the school. Networks with other Manitoba teachers diminished. But most important for the people involved was the sense of ownership:

> *It's not an administration from somewhere else: the administration is right from Peguis and it's run by Peguis people, that's what makes a successful school. It's always meeting the needs of the community, not just needs of industry or outside sources.* (Teacher, Peguis)

The choices that are made at the school are consequential and difficult. Much diversity remains on the reserve: different churches, different beliefs about the importance of the Indian heritage and the Ojibway language, different approaches to economic development.

> *There are different interests. But at the same time I think there's a common interest in terms of developing this reserve and in providing the best for our people and raising the standards. I guess I would be one to feel the effect of their expectations, which have been raised. Then you have to continue to build on these and it puts pressure on us to keep it at the same level and also increase it. It keeps you on your toes.* (Chief, Peguis Band)

The schools in this study strain towards autonomy and chafe at constraints from the system. They are schools proud of what they are doing, wanting to do more of it, their way. At the same time, they draw on the resources available at the board and the province, and share the general directions articulated by the province or district. They respond to incentives made available centrally, but like to do so independently.

Choice and Neighbourhoods

Granted there is no one best way to educate students, and that different programs are appropriate for different students, broadening the choice of schools and programs is clearly important. Information about the options available to students must be widely distributed, and the process of deciding the best placement for students must be made more open. Many argue that families have most information about their children and the most interest in getting the decision right (Wilkinson *et al*, 1994; Chubb and Moe, 1990; Coons and Sugarman, 1978). The added advantage of choice is that schools develop connections to parents and broader communities where there is agreement on values and goals and where, as a result, everyone feels supported. Important social, moral, and political issues can be discussed on the basis of some common principles.

Many of the arguments about systems of school choice are similar to the arguments about tracking presented at the end of the previous chapter, although parents have more impact on the choice of school than on the choice of courses. Should there be a single kind of schooling for all, or should there be different kinds of schooling for different kinds of communities? What are the effects on equity, on teaching and learning, and on the democratic ideals we espouse? Despite anecdotal claims to the contrary, there is little evidence that systems of school choice increase student achievement (Cookson, 1994), and little agreement that choice plans can solve the problems of public schools, although in certain contexts they can solve particular problems (Carnegie Foundation, 1992; Henig, 1994). Although there are always some choices for students and parents in school, it is a complex matter to decide which choices are appropriate, how to disseminate information about alternatives, and how to match students with the right educational experience. In different contexts, "choice" will mean different things and have different consequences.

With most schools in this study, at least some of the students and their families can choose whether to attend the school, and an environment in which schools compete for students and demonstrate their distinctiveness is already in place, if downplayed. Langley is advertised as a school of choice. The pressure to keep neighbourhood students enrolled at Vancouver Technical when they can register "out of boundary" and attend district-wide programs has stimulated change at the school. At New Norway High School, enrolment dropped to 38 when parents were unhappy with the school: students returned from other schools when they felt the quality of the school had improved. Joe Duquette provides an alternative for First Nations students, but even a mainstream school like Balfour is aware of competition from neighbouring Catholic and other schools in Regina. In 1984, the Regina School Board introduced a strategy to encourage schools to develop distinctiveness, partly to help students and parents choose the form of secondary education most suitable for them. The strategy has been a catalyst for lively inter-school competition. Most of the students at Kildonan East live in the vicinity, but some travel a distance to take advantage of special education programs. At Peguis, students sometimes decide to go to Winnipeg for at least part of their schooling. Contact and Corktown are school communities based on choice across the Toronto Board's entire area. St. Benedict offers a religious choice, Pain Court one based on language. Georges Vanier offers specific programs for the district as a whole, and draws students who "drop back in" to school from across North York.

At Les Etchemins, private schools have provided the competition. Over the past decade, the school has moved from losing clientele to having a surplus of students. It recently developed a music program to improve its image and to retain the students attracted by the music program in a neighbouring school in the same board. The strategy was so successful that the school continued to develop more optional programs.

Appalaches draws most students from its district, but two neighbouring schools enrol students who want a vocational program or are not performing well enough to handle the academic subjects at Appalaches. Centennial is for Protestant students, but many Catholics have chosen to enrol as well. In Hartland, students attend only if they want the academic program; otherwise they go to the neighbouring town. Népisiguit was founded as an alternative for francophone students and to signal the resurgence of pride in Acadian culture. At Sydney, girls can go to a nearby Catholic girls' school and any student can attend a French immersion program at a neighbouring school. Sydney competes for academic students with programs such as its International Baccalaureate. As one teacher put it: "We're stealing the best students from all over the island. Let's hope no one ever catches on."

Choices in these communities are often based on cultural, language, and religious differences, as well as on program. Studies in Britain and the United States show that parents choose schools where their children will be with students from higher social classes (Willms and Echols, 1992). The Carnegie Foundation argues that choices are often made on social rather than academic grounds. More choices are available to students with well-informed parents, and entry into some school communities is more difficult than into others. The "fit" between a student and a school depends on academic, social, cultural, and religious factors.

Student flows to wealthier schools were viewed as a concern at Vancouver Technical, so steps were taken to stop the outflow to west side and private schools. New programs were, as one staff member expressed it, "used as honey to the other bees to increase our population and keep the quality of the school where it should be. If you can draw that kind of student, keep them here until they have a sense of belonging, then they're here, and a lot...come specially for those programs."

With these schools, schools that are admired for various reasons, losing students to higher social class schools is probably less of a problem than if plans for choice were adopted in all Canadian school districts. If a school had a poor reputation, students could vote with their feet. Declining enrolments can signal academic trouble, although they may simply reflect changing demographics.

Some schools are clearly labelled schools of choice. They frequently have a mission, a sense of how they are different that provides energy and enthusiasm in the face of a real or imagined hostile society. These schools create or maintain a community as well as reflect it. Pain Court, for example, is a school of choice that grew out of changes in government policy on minority-language schools, a Catholic board of education with an interest in preserving a traditionally Catholic community, and a diverse group of parents that has many reasons to maintain a French-language school in an overwhelmingly anglophone community. The result is a school where English and French come together, where anglophones choose a French-language education for economic and cultural reasons and francophones find a place to maintain their cultural and language traditions. Even if the school cannot single-handedly stop assimilation with the majority anglophone group, it can reduce the effects of assimilation on the community.

Many students choose a school to improve their job opportunities, a choice the parents support. Francophone parents choose a French-language school mainly to see their language and culture maintained. Anglophone parents tend to register their children at Pain Court to make them bilingual. Pain Court is an academic small school, with a reputation for sending a high proportion of students on to university. In this school, competition with the public system is low key. Funds from the Ontario Transition Years project were used to enhance relations with the neighbouring francophone schools, to make sure that students knew about Pain Court, and to try to impress them with the value of continuing their studies in French. Although this is not a market system, such pressures are felt, as provincial funding depends on enrolment.

Native schools perform some of the same roles, keeping languages alive, teaching the new generation about the ways of the Elders, exploring oral traditions, and providing a focus for discussions on future directions. At Peguis, where some of these things are contentious, the researchers felt that every person recognizes that the future of the Peguis Reserve centres on the lives of the students who have attended, now attend, and will attend the school. Its success lies in the recognition of this inescapable connection.

Joe Duquette takes Native students who are often in difficulty in the surrounding mainstream schools and provides them with a sense of their heritage.

Langley School District is philosophically committed to choice among schools. Langley Fine Arts School was established as an alternative school dedicated to preserving the arts in a society where arts were marginalized. There was a vibrant arts community in the district. Langley students choose their school and travel to it from out of the neighbourhood, using limited busing for which they have to pay. Several families have uprooted themselves from other communities to move close to the school so that their children can attend. Controversy exists about how these students are chosen and how they choose the school, and whether they constitute an "elite," thereby draining student resources from other schools or creating an exclusive community. When Langley was created, other schools in the district were concerned because they thought Langley would siphon off all the top students.

Selecting "the right kind of children for the school" was central to the original committee's proposal for a fine arts school. The original document states that students should be identified as committed to the arts, and that

> *Academic achievement of applicants should indicate the student is working at or close to district norms in the areas of reading, language arts and mathematics. However, where a prospective student is under-achieving in a regular school setting, serious consideration will be given to waiving this requirement given the success of a fine arts environment in stimulating this type of student.* (Proposal for establishing Langley Fine Arts School, unpublished document, 1985)

The controversy about whether the school is elitist continues in a low key. A teachers' association executive member expressed concern as follows:

> *It has come to our attention that students were screened and those with lower grades were discouraged. I don't know how this was done. We've seen memos from the principal that tell parents that learning assistance is not available at Langley Fine Arts School, so that if they have a student who needs some additional help in learning, they should look elsewhere.*

The principal, on the other hand, presents a philosophy of openness to all. He has pushed the issue in staff meetings, and teachers agree that they must be tolerant, accepting, and encouraging of all students.

> *...we need to be...open and welcoming to any child in the community who wants to be here and to be careful not to fall into an elitist trap; to do what we can to prove to the community that we're not anything like that. I'm sure people have told you about some of the difficulties with parents that don't want any behaviourally disturbed kids here, and this is not a school for learning disabled, and we only want academic kids that find the academics easy so they can cruise along...and then spend all of their time doing their fine arts. Well, we're*

> *not a private school and I really don't believe that public funding ought to be offering that.* (Principal, Langley)

Today, the school appears to attract both students who are interested or talented in the fine arts, and those who have found it difficult to adjust to the regimen of larger, more traditional secondary schools. If one group is a kind of elite, the other contains potential early school leavers who would not usually be considered elite. Those attached to the original vision feel that many students are now at Langley for "the wrong reasons."

Admission to Toronto's alternative schools causes less conflict, probably because they are seen as marginalized rather than elitist. One teacher described teaching in an alternative school as being "relegated to Siberia" in the minds of most mainstream teachers. At Contact, students must attend an information session given weekly by a streetworker, then place their name on a waiting list. When an opening becomes available, a student meets with the co-ordinator and signs the attendance policy and the student code, and takes a literacy test to ensure he or she meets the basic eligibility standards. After that, students are evaluated by the co-ordinator and the streetworker, and can be forced out of the program if their behaviour, attendance, or academic progress is not acceptable.

In North York, the board encourages parents and students to "shop around" for schools and programs that are suitable to their needs. Georges Vanier's numerous programs are being promoted more actively in newsletters and brochures as the school strives to improve, and indeed correct, its image in the competition to attract students. Transition sessions for students from local feeder schools are held to encourage students to choose it if they want a valuable educational experience. Furthermore, they are told to choose another school if their only interest in Vanier is a belief in its bad reputation and their desire to attend and cause trouble.

The Vancouver School Board reflects the concerns about choice. Although in the 1970s the district started a few magnet schools that draw from across the city, and operates a series of alternative programs for students at risk, it has stopped developing such programs. Instead, it has decided to emphasize neighbourhood schools that cater to all students that live near a particular building. Competition for students intensified between 1970 and 1986 when Vancouver's student population declined.

> *Are you going to force a 13-year-old to compete for scarce places? On what basis will they compete? Will they compete by their academic excellence? Will they compete by their facility with language? Will they compete by the resources of their parents? What will have them compete for the scarce places in a program? Will everyone have equal consideration? Or will some get first consideration because a program is in their neighbourhood school? There is a real danger that when you create magnet schools, you damage the existing programs and affect the students who thrive in comprehensive schools. When you open up a gifted mini-school, all of a sudden you are competing for students at other schools. Then the only way that the next school can compete and retain their gifted mathematics students is by offering a gifted program as well. And the thing just kind of tumbles down that everybody has to create the perception that they have a competing program. It may not change reality, but it may devastate a school that doesn't put a lot of energy into that, once you start competing for those kinds of students.* (Superintendent, Vancouver School Board)

Competition among schools in the district is strictly regulated, although enterprising principals have been known to try to get around the restrictions.

> *They're not allowed to advertise, to compete. Competition is by word-of-mouth.... In a sense there's competition by reputation. But there's no competition allowed by advertising. And if we opened that door, the schools that might fare the worst in that are schools [like Vancouver Tech] that have to overcome the misconceptions about them.* (Superintendent, Vancouver School Board)

An uneasy compromise seems to be to create magnets within a neighbourhood school largely to serve its own population, as Vancouver Technical has done. Decisions about where to allocate scarce resources are then made within the school. One district administrator described this as specialization to meet diversity within each neighbourhood. Schools seek such distinctive focuses, in part, out of a desire to create a positive identity in the community. "Competing with other schools is one way to use your entrepreneurial energy," explained the superintendent. "A better way, from the Vancouver perspective, is to use that entrepreneurial energy to develop the best programs for the students who attend that school."

In some communities, the parents' and students' choices are very limited. Grandy's River is the school for all students in two small outport communities. Qitiqliq serves all students in Arviat, except for the very few who might go to Rankin Inlet (a larger community with a longer history of secondary schooling). Kildonan and Appalaches draw students largely from within their own boundaries. A system of choice, however it is conceived, will not solve the problems of Canada's schools. It is not feasible everywhere.

Nonetheless, diversity remains within schools. All the students who want to study the fine arts do not agree on other issues of curriculum or social concern. Students who want to learn in French in an anglophone community may not agree on other values and cultural issues. Issues of quality and of community must be handled in each school in a way that recognizes difference and enhances learning.

Choice can, however, help create schools where shared purposes are clearer, energy for learning is greater, and agreement on fundamentals allows the exploration of intellectual, social and moral commitments that would simply be marginalized in a larger, more neutral school environment. If engaging passion, morality and identity is central to schooling, allowing choice raises the chances for it to happen, although it cannot ensure it. The problem for public policy is to make the choices open to all, and to ensure that diversity within the school continues to be respected. Diversity of options should not be based on a single hierarchy, good schools and "less good" schools, but on the variety of communities that constitute Canada. Neighbourhoods, however, are not the only communities that can be recognized as school communities. Aboriginal, fine arts, and other kinds of schools based on common interests have their place if they encourage students to live in harmony.

Concluding Comments: Autonomy and Accountability

The schools' connection with external communities raises questions of autonomy and accountability, common purpose, and the recognition of difference. In these schools, a sense of autonomy underpins their energy, initiative and purposeful decisions to respond to changing circumstances of families and students. At the same time, their knowledge of and responsiveness to that external community needs to be bolstered by programs that connect schools with the outside world, and their decisions need to be supported by information about what outsiders value and can contribute.

One of the things that stands out about these schools is their sense that they are in some way "special," and that they deliberately plan and organize to be distinctive. What also stands out is the difficulty of obtaining the time and information, agreements, resources, and organizational structures necessary to continue the planning. Schools, like most organizations, tend to be oriented towards solving immediate problems. They have been described as "prisoners of time," driven by the schedule rather than oriented towards the future and towards a larger community. The bus is coming, the timetable says, the contract insists. To deliberate about directions, to plan, to choose in light of broad social issues, rather than to be driven by everyday internal demands is hard when time and resources are scarce.

Policy should support the school's sense that it can make a difference, that it can innovate and respond to general objectives in its own particular way. Every school need not be the same to ensure equality. In fact, equal outcomes in different contexts demand different kinds of schooling. The dilemma is how closely efforts to be different need to be constrained by democratic politics, and whether a particular parent community can endanger the common ideals we hold for public schools. The market should not replace democratic politics and public consultation, though it can spur innovation and provide a form of accountability.

Policy cannot assume the existence of a cohesive external community that will support or raise questions about how schools function. Schools are often the locus of creating community, not just responding to it. They can bring together parents and students who might otherwise never confront one another. Although connection, likemindedness, and support are necessary for human development, they can also constrain and restrict. The cosmopolitan and the local must be balanced in schools, as must independence and accountability, similarity and difference. In different schools, these balances are likely to be achieved differently.

Chapter 9

Information and Accountability

Schools have traditionally only been held accountable in the broadest sense of having to conform to Board policies, and we've relied pretty extensively, I think, on the professional judgements of principals and teachers in terms of the quality of what's happening in that way. But there hasn't been much systematic testing. And so, in that sense, there hasn't been a whole lot of accountability. And what information has been gathered hasn't been made public. And there are good reasons for that. It's not as though it's a plot to keep the public in ignorance. But, with the best of intentions, that was the way it was viewed at the time. I think that's all changing now and people are insisting on having a more direct kind of accountability. (Superintendent, Georges Vanier)

I think the reluctance of teachers to be surveyed by the public might be in part at least based upon what's going on in the media and society out there. I believe that teachers believe that there will be some parents coming in and not quite understanding why a teacher is doing what he or she is doing. (And there are 32 students there.) And they just might make

> *suggestions that might be outlandish or annoying or they might even take it somewhere else to the school board or to the media.* (Teacher, Vancouver Technical)

PROVIDING THE PUBLIC with more information about schools has been a major feature in new policy initiatives in Canada, for the public can play a constructive role in educational debates only if it is well informed. School teachers and administrators also need more information to help them assess and improve their performance. Given the level of public investment in schools, and the schools' need for public support and involvement, such an effort is critical. A more systematic approach to data gathering and use could improve the way schools make decisions and also serve the public's need to know about schooling. But what information to collect and how to collect, use, and report it remain controversial issues. Although policy makers have argued for more standardized testing, schools attach greater importance to more informal ways of understanding and measuring success. Policy has focused on academic achievement, but other goals are just as important.

Our research suggests that schools collect little systematic evidence that can be shared with others on many of the things they want to achieve — academic success, higher retention rates, more university-bound students, formation of good citizens, violence prevention, a school atmosphere conducive to learning, and more positive community perceptions. They collect and report little standard information on the characteristics of their clientele, programs, or processes. Not only is information not readily available, but educators have spent little time wondering which data, other than student report cards, would be valuable to them or to others. They are understandably afraid of how data might be interpreted and the uses to which more information might be put. It could be used, for example, to track student performance over time, rate schools, show parents a school's strengths or weaknesses, or allocate funds. Because the consequences are not clear, because there is public criticism of schools, because gathering information is time-consuming and expensive, and because interpretations are not straightforward, collecting more data about schooling is often seen as potentially dangerous and misleading rather than helpful.

The difficulties of getting the right information to the right audience are evident in our case studies. This chapter discusses the informal ways information about schools is communicated, the measurement of academic achievement (the topic of greatest public debate), and the assessment of other goals of schools.

Reputation and Informal Knowledge

Schools in this study were nominated largely because of their reputation in their community. Someone had enough information about what the schools are doing to fill out a form explaining what makes them "exemplary." The schools were proud enough of what they are doing to welcome researchers and to assume that the scrutiny and publicity would enhance rather than undermine their reputation. It is not surprising that they all stressed the value of a good image.

Schools with a strong academic reputation, such as Sydney Academy, which draws "the best students" from across Cape Breton Island, are well-served by it.

> *There has always been something associated with the name…some aura that indicated you are approaching…an important institution. Academy teachers…have a certain aura about them as well. The principal who hired me was a gentleman and a scholar…almost a mystical figure. Many of the staff members, at that time, were [also] almost mystical figures. The teachers had a tremendous reputation for being knowledgeable, good teachers, and very demanding.* (Teacher, Sydney)

This good image is bolstered by the school's efforts to communicate with its community. Awards banquets recognize and publicize academic and athletic achievements. The school newspaper has been mailed out to more than a thousand homes. The local newspaper, *The Cape Breton Post,* frequently carries articles on the accomplishments of academy students.

> *You have to praise the accomplishments of your kids. During our Spring Fest, I put all the Nova Scotia achievement scores in the local newspaper…. I didn't rate them against any other school, just against the norms of the province. Of course, we did exceptionally well.* (Vice-principal, Sydney)

Hartland is also well-served by its academic reputation. Students do well in competitions and exams, and the school takes care to tell this to the community. Some staff members are ambivalent about whether schools should be so concerned about public image.

> *In this school sometimes...it's public relations first and everything else has to come later. Somebody's always wanting to put you on display.* (Teacher, Hartland)

Népisiguit is also recognized as a school that is "progressive and proactive." Its reputation extends beyond the local community to the province and even the nation. It was part of a video made by the Canadian Association of Principals and distributed around the country. It attracted the premier to the opening of its technology lab. These good public relations enhance the autonomy and the resources of the school.

At St. Benedict, a conscious public relations effort formed part of a school change strategy. When two new administrators arrived in 1988, they decided to recreate the school based on a vision of "invitational education" described in the writings of William Purkey (Purkey and Stanley, 1991). They created a school motto to symbolize the vision.

> *We came in with a theme. It was a bit of a marketing ploy in my own mind that if we establish a focus for the school as a goal or a theme and we put it on coffee mugs....We put it everywhere ....And we say "OK, we are going to be A Celebration of People. That's what this school is going to define itself as."* (Principal, St. Benedict)

At Centennial an administrator, very aware of community relations, comments:

> *There's nothing better than advertising by word of mouth.....* (Board administrator, Centennial)

Large inner-city schools have a harder time establishing a good reputation. When a Vancouver Technical student was stabbed on school grounds by a group of youths, inflammatory reports in the local media linked the school to a rise in teen violence. Members of the school community united in their opposition to this negative publicity, pointing out that no one ever calls the newspapers when something goes well.

> *Van Tech has been hurt by some really deceptive reporting, if not outright fabrication, on the way they reported [the stabbing incident]. And it hurt them badly, because the parents read [the report] and they get false impressions of the school.* (Superintendent of schools, Vancouver School Board)

> *Nobody talks about the drug problem in the West End, yet the moment a couple of grade 9 kids have a scrap at Van Tech, the cameramen and media rush over and talk about the gang problems at our school. East Van has always had a bad reputation, as far back as I can remember, that comes from, I think, the "higher class" West End.* (Student, Vancouver Technical

Georges Vanier also suffered from its reputation. The researchers noted that most people interviewed for the case study referred to the bad image that the school has endured over the past 10 or 15 years, depicting it as a violent, drug-ridden place where little learning occurs: "A bad reputation is a hard thing to shake." Such a reputation has immediate negative consequences. A proposal to relocate a gifted program to Vanier has run into opposition in the community. According to the vice-principal, the school's reputation has meant that "kids began to move to outlying schools, and the drain changed the whole student profile. Students who do come are scared at first."

At Balfour, too, the poor academic image associated with the school's technical past persists. Researchers reported hearing many comments about how hard it was to shake the school's "tough" image. The staff are determined that the community gets an accurate picture of Balfour in the 1990s.

> *The image has improved an awful lot for Balfour...we were always known as the Balfour Technical School. People are catching on now, and, in the area I live in, they say a lot of very good things about Balfour. I think that our community relations are very strong.* (Teacher, Balfour)

Reputation is an important resource that many schools in the study try to protect or enhance. Counteracting negative publicity requires a great deal of personal contact and community work. Some would rather use the energy to work with students; others feel uneasy about marketing and blowing their own horn. However, a new relationship with the external community means these schools are broadening their view of what is necessary in order to include more public relations work. It often pays off.

Measuring Academic Outcomes

> *In the end, they'll judge us by how many kids pass and how many kids fail.* (Former principal, Georges Vanier)

Achievement scores on standardized academic tests and students' results on examinations are the indices that matter most. They are the focus of most accountability efforts. The federal government has funded international comparative studies of the achievement of Canadian students in science and in reading and writing. The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, is overseeing national studies of student achievement in mathematics, language, and science. Most provinces administer standard examinations in some form at the end of secondary school and use standardized testing in core subjects to monitor how much students learn. For the most part, these tests have no consequences for students, and are not reported by schools. They are designed to indicate the health of the system but are weakly linked to proposals for changes in practice.

In these case studies, examination results are the academic indicators with most force for schools. Although the scores are generally reported, the form of the reports varies among schools and trends are not reported. Only Quebec reports the participation rates and the results in every subject by school every year. In some of the cases, comparative statistics on a school's examination results had been calculated for the board or the province but were not available to researchers. In British Columbia, a longitudinal analysis of examination results for a school was available for a fee. Standardized results on provincial or national testing programs (e.g., provincial learning assessments, school academic indicators program, or tests of basic skills) are reported only for Grandy's River. Systematic comparison of the achievements of these schools on the basis of these kinds of data is not possible, nor is evaluation of a particular school's performance over time. Our research project did not have the data to link school observations, policies, or programs to academic outcomes within or across schools.

In these schools, examination results are accorded great importance. They are critical for students and their families and affect the school's reputation. Interpretation of the meaning of the results, however, is open to debate. For example, the Grandy's River report says that on provincial examinations, the school's average marks in advanced math, business math and academic math were all higher than the district and provincial averages. This is a point of pride in the school. A table on examination results — available for 1991, 1992, and 1993 — provides comparisons between Grandy's River and the district and province on 12 examinations. Although the table offers one clear index of "how the school is doing," its meaning is equivocal. Some scores are about average, others just above or below. What exactly can one conclude if no sustained trends are apparent, no contextual information is given comparing Grandy's River with the district or province, no analysis links programs and achievement, and no analyst helps the reader understand which students and which teachers seem to be doing well and why?

Whatever their ambiguities, such clear and publicly reported examination results affect students and therefore influence how teachers think about their work. Evidence is strong that teachers teach for the test (Richardson, 1994). In Newfoundland, teachers must submit mark estimates for their students, which are then adjusted based on provincial examination results. One teacher saw success in the fact that her students' marks were raised when provincial norms were taken into account. It told her that her standards for marking were consistent with the exam and as tough as, or tougher than, those of other teachers around the province. Educational practices like this tell teachers they are preparing students well.

The presence of provincial examinations changes testing practice. For example, the principal describes how examinations influence teachers:

> *I would not do the world problems course the way I am doing*

> *it now if I could evaluate my own way. Right now ...I have to get that content to them in some way for them to reproduce it on an exam. A lot of my time goes to that.* (Principal, Grandy's River)

Students' results on standardized tests are also reported at Grandy's River. Their relatively low scores on the 1989 Canadian Test of Basic Skills (20th percentile in vocabulary, 32nd in reading, 37th in language), may be due to the local dialect, in which words and grammar are used differently from standard English. The fact that the school takes students with low vocabulary results on a standardized test and ensures they do well on exams makes its achievement especially noteworthy.

At Appalaches, students also write many examinations and the results are widely reported. In 1992-93 (and that year only) the Quebec government published *Réussite éducative : enseignement primaire et secondaire.* This report gave two indicators for each school: the rate of graduation (D) and the average family income for the school's catchment area (R). Appalaches was nominated for our study because it scored 10 on D, meaning that it was among the top 10 per cent of schools in graduation rates, and 2 on R, indicating that it was among the poorest 20 per cent in family income.

The Quebec government also publishes annually a document that reports the graduation rate and the results in each subject by school on ministry exams. (The latest edition is *Results of the June 1994 Ministry Examination by School Board and by School and Graduation Rates by School Board.*) In Quebec, the province sets exams in some subjects in the final years. Other exams, which are more frequent and numerous, are set by the school boards. Boards create a test bank from which schools can choose their exams and modify them.

The case study report on Appalaches includes a table on student results for the second year in math, physical science, chemistry, and physics. It compares scores at Appalaches with average scores for the board and province. The school results are comparable to those of the province and the board in chemistry, lower in physics, and higher in advanced physical sciences. As at Grandy's River, one wonders about the meaning of the table. Not knowing how many students wrote each examination, or what might account for the results, one learns little. It is only in context that these scores can be interpreted and their meaning for practice drawn out.

The school has done its own analysis of student achievement. The researchers report that the school keeps

> *a file for following up progress in individualized instruction to find out how well the students are doing after a given stage, if some of them had previously been in the regular classes....The results... were rather surprising: ... for the past three years, the teaching team has, at the end of the year, reclassified 50 per cent of the students who had been in grade 8 individualized instruction to regular classes. But again, data must be combined with local judgement. Some students ask to stay in special classes even if the grade-level team thinks that they are capable of being in the regular program.*

The academic emphasis of Appalaches is certainly reinforced by the constant examinations and reporting of results. They ensure that teachers follow the curriculum and provide a basis for evaluating teachers. Every student must pass the same exams, although some will take longer than others. Exams are the reason for students to work hard.

> *I like to prepare my students as if they were going into the ring to face a champion boxer. The exam is the champion and they have to get ready to challenge [it]. I don't care for easy little questions.* (Teacher, Appalaches)

Les Etchemins is subject to the same system.

> *At each stage, report cards are distributed. At that time, if a high failure rate is noted for a given group, we look into the matter with the teacher who has given the marks. In his/her course outline, I see what percentage comes from course work, what percentage from exams, tests, etc. I try to find out whether the tests came from the teacher or are the same ones used by other teachers for the same level. If they're tests with which he is familiar, I check the difficulty with the teacher. If the test seems okay, we then try to find out why so many students failed. This leads to a useful discussion about instructional methods....* (Vice-principal, Les Etchemins)

Examinations are "high-stakes testing" for students, since their futures are affected by the results. The stakes are not as high for teachers and schools. Although results are reported, nothing at school depends on them: no extra dollars, no plan to let other schools or teachers know how the successful succeeded, no change in the conditions of teaching for next year for the unsuccessful. The processes set in motion by exam results are informal ones: pressure is exerted and interpretations are made by different people for different purposes.

In schools where standard examinations do not play such a large part, teachers still worry about the potential impact of more board or provincial testing. Since student achievement is related to the social characteristics of students, they fear that schools will be judged by the student population, not by the quality of the teaching. Jeanne-Mance draws students from a disproportionate number of families who do not have French as a first language, which pulls down results on academic exams. Sydney has the International Baccalaureate program, which draws the most academically inclined students, thus raising exam results. Hartland has a long history of doing very well in grades 10-12, but part of the reason, according to the district administrator, is that the school has a select population of students.

Knowing the average academic achievements of students does not easily translate into knowing how well a school is educating its students. Huberman (1993) argues as follows:

> *Resuscitating three sullen, low-performing pupils on the brink of dropping out counts more than raising class-level achievement tests by half a standard deviation in 6 months. Bringing back three such pupils is a far more stringent and sophisticated test of professional capacity. Also, it provides a more tangible, possibly durable professional reward; it amounts, after all, to a small miracle rather than to the accomplishment of a valued institutional outcome.*

Even if one were to value equally the learning of all students, exam results do not describe how much the school has added to a student's learning as the student moves from one grade to the next. Some schools start with students who know more and learn more easily. There are statistical techniques that yield an estimate of the "value added." Hierarchical linear modelling, for example, has been used in Scotland to measure how much students learn, after controlling for their scores at the beginning of high school (Willms and Echols, 1992). However, these techniques require systematic and long-term data bases on student achievement not currently available in Canada.

These problems are well recognized by administrators:

> *I don't think there is going to be any administrator in this system that will see Contact accountable in ways that we might hold other schools accountable because they are trying to serve a disenfranchised group who are essentially non-school students and if they can bridge some difficult gaps, wonderful.* (Associate director, Toronto Board of Education)

Comprehensive schools must struggle with the usefulness of knowing comparative results while not misinterpreting them or having them misinterpreted by others. Georges Vanier, for example, illustrates well the difficulties experienced by a school in the face of an increasing emphasis on accountability through standardized testing, in an area with relatively low income levels, a multilingual population, and programs tailored to the needs of students at risk of failing and leaving school. North York has emphasized greater accountability to the board and community, introducing standardized testing, particularly in the areas of literacy and numeracy, in response to concern about declining achievement and skill levels of students. The director of education, who was a member of the federal Steering Group on Prosperity, is committed to developing a profile of "critical skills" to be taught and tested across the curriculum. The new accountability initiatives take several forms, not all based on standardized testing, though it has a prominent place. The board encourages students to take part in local, provincial, and international tests and competitions. It surveys students, staff, and parents, and tests students in grades 4, 6, 8, and 10 in math and grades 3, 5, 9, and 12 in reading, writing, spelling, and grammar. It is returning to a more formal system of evaluating teachers, a system that had been in place up to 15 years ago. Schools are required to develop a plan that sets objectives for three years and to consider how to implement them. Objectives must include the board's objectives of improving literacy and numeracy, and retaining more students. Georges Vanier's school plan also includes objectives on improving the school's image and student responsibilities. So far, school and individual results on the board tests have not been released to the community or parents. Teacher evaluation is not linked to achievement test results.

Vanier teachers do not believe that results of standardized tests will take account of students' social class and language differences or the fact that the school draws students who have failed elsewhere. They are afraid the testing will just confirm the negative reputation they are trying to shake.

> *Our teachers are concerned. They think the results lead to a perception that is unfair. The results are not a reflection of the quality of teaching in this school. If you can't determine the quality of those who enter, you can't determine the quality of those who leave.* (Teacher, Georges Vanier)

A teacher discusses a board-wide math test:

> *We have low grade 10 classes right now. The teacher believes the students are functioning at a grade 5, 6, 7 level in math. So you can imagine the results when we have them write benchmarks... I don't think teachers feel the benefit of these tests, but the board can appease public opinion and say "Yes, we are testing our students"....Ultimately the purpose is supposed to be to identify weaknesses in a program, but nothing official has been expressed to anyone yet about what's going to be done with the results. [They are] difficult to interpret, and the board office doesn't get into interpretation.* (Teacher, Georges Vanier)

Teachers also note that achievement results need to be coupled with attention to classroom change if standards are to be raised.

> *As far as I know, the board has had a literacy priority for the last couple of years. But up to this point it's just been rhetoric and testing. There's been no classroom change and no professional development for teachers about teaching English as a second language students better.... Because of the results of the ministry review of grade 12 writing, there is a concern because all of the schools in the board scored low.* (Teacher, Georges Vanier)

Although Georges Vanier students do poorly on language tests, teachers comment that their ESL students from Asia perform better on science tests than students with other backgrounds, accounting for the school's numerous awards in this subject.

In Canada, the actual content of standardized testing is discussed much less than the pros and cons of doing any kind of testing. In the United States, on the other hand, policy makers, including the president, school boards, state governors, and national teachers' unions, have engaged in discussions of national curriculum standards and subject-matter frameworks (Kirst, 1994). These may help avoid the pitfalls of tests that emphasize low-level multiple choice questions with single correct answers, although not all commentators find such standards useful (Darling-Hammond, 1994). Discussion of curriculum content in relation to testing makes the meaning and significance of the tests much clearer.

> *I believe that you have a documented curriculum, something that is very clearly laid out so that we can say these are the goals and we either did or did not achieve these goals.* (Principal, Langley)

Langley was premised on the assumption that the curriculum should change to include the arts as equal partners. Judging a school on standardized academic test results is hard if a school tries to develop alternative curriculum, because, as noted in Chapter 5, core academic subjects are those most often examined. Not only do examination results in academic subjects not reflect the goals of Langley, documenting the new curriculum and agreeing on alternative outcome measures demand resources and teacher time that are very scarce. Portfolios and performances are important ways of evaluating achievement in the fine arts, and although these can be compared on a provincial or international basis, the criteria for success are more contentious than in the established academic disciplines. As McGregor *et al.* (1993) point out, there is some tension between the criteria of creativity and technical skill:

> *The idea that a person engaged in arts activity should be free to wander at will through the world of ideas is a recurring one in western civilization. At the same time, there is a tradition of craft, of mastery of materials and instruments that can only be acquired by following rules of practice. In North America,*

> *the nineteenth-century origins of education in the arts in the public school were caught up in that same tension between the need to demonstrate skill mastery and the desire to embrace autonomy and incomparability. The tension persists to this day.*

Many people contrast the "subjectivity" of assessment in the arts to the "objectivity" of assessment in academic subjects.

> *I've been trying to get [teachers]...to admit that this is subjective. This is personal. Now there are certain facets of doing an appraisal of a piece of art that can be made objective, but to a large extent my appraisal might not be the same as another person's. Their frame of reference might be different. What they are looking for might be different, and therefore the criteria they selected. That's a really muddy area.* (Principal, Langley)

Even in this fine arts school, the principal and teachers were anxious about the results of academic provincial examinations. When the results were good, everyone was relieved. What was clear to the research team is the power of exams to shape directions in, and images of, the school, even when academic achievement only partially reflects the school's mission.

Evaluation of vocational programs results in the same debates as evaluation in the fine arts. Their lower status is sometimes linked to the fact that there are no exams that represent the attainment of "standards" recognized by all. Does the fact that a student found a job on graduation mean that the program was a good one or that the student has learned what was taught? Or is it rather a statement about the labour market? Agreeing on the content of the curriculum and on the criteria to be used to evaluate what students have learned is difficult, not just in vocational, but in all subjects, including English, history, and mathematics. In every subject, the legitimacy of examinations depends on an agreed-upon definition of what students should learn.

At Qitiqliq, the problem of testing is compounded by the students' different language and culture. The researchers point out how formal evaluation conflicts with the school's focus on culture-based learning and informal rewards for effort and class participation. Readying students for Alberta provincial examinations and meeting the objectives of the Alberta curriculum determine the senior secondary programs, and in some cases, the teaching styles. The Keewatin Board of Education encourages teachers within the Northwest Territories to serve as examination markers so that they learn provincial standards and convey them to their schools. The school is under pressure to increase the number of grade 12 graduates and focus on high standards, which means success on the exams. In Qitiqliq, where just getting to school on time can be considered success, senior secondary teachers have to strike a delicate balance between building self-esteem and accommodating normative standards, between formative evaluation and the territorial summative evaluation, between school and community expectations. The researchers commented:

> *The increase in standardization of expectations and forms of evaluation that appear to be emerging may have a negative effect on some programs that stress life skills and student self-esteem, things that are not necessarily measurable in normative standards or can be classified in neat boxes.*

Reporting average levels of achievement also ignores the distribution of test scores among students. The spread between the highest and lowest scores and the characteristics of students who are getting the high and the low scores tells us which students are learning and which students need more attention or exposure to different instructional methods. The distribution of achievement among students of different sex, language, ethnicity, and socioeconomic group tells us for whom the school is successful. Despite the concern about girls' achievement in mathematics and science, only the Georges Vanier report includes data on gender differences in test results. Although female enrolment levels in math were lower than those of males, Vanier's female students had a higher average mark (63 per cent) than the males (58 per cent). Despite the concern about Native students in comprehensive schools, their scores on exams are not reported or analyzed separately. Collecting and reporting achievement by language, cultural, or racial groups is controversial because it might be used to stereotype, although it can also be used to address inequities. Such achievement differences may be talked of in the school, but they are not reported or analyzed in any public forum.

The extent to which examination results determine the curriculum has important effects on how a school is organized and how learning is evaluated. The lack of systematic information about academic achievement in this study is surprising. A few inadequate measures assume great importance, and the analysis and reporting of the results is extremely poor. A more systematic and sophisticated approach to analyzing and interpreting standardized achievement tests would allow parents, teachers, administrators, and the public to better understand what is reported.

Measuring Other Outcomes

Academic achievement is only one aspect of school success. School retention and enrolment patterns, student destinations after high school, parent and student satisfaction, levels of violence, numbers of detentions, and the achievement of social goals are considered just as important in these schools. Educational policy makers are moving towards the gathering of information on these aspects, but at present they do not receive nearly as much attention as achievement testing. Levels of satisfaction with schooling are surveyed by the Canadian Education Association but are not reported by province. The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, has decided to collect standardized information from each province on student flows, citizenship indicators, and the satisfaction of the public. The new reports on schools promised in Alberta include a great deal of parent survey data. Quebec reports graduation rates for each school. Rates of early school leaving have been calculated by Statistics Canada, by province and for the country, even though no single measure is accepted by all. In these broader areas, provinces, boards and schools have few standard indicators.

In this project, the researchers were asked to collect available statistics on retention rates, student flows (including early school leaving), course participation, and post-high school destinations, and budget. They were also asked to find out about past surveys. The case studies indicate that secondary schools gather information that, for the most part, can be described as haphazard, anecdotal, and unsystematic. In some cases, researchers were able to calculate for themselves rates of school leaving or of continuation to post-secondary education. The school did not routinely calculate them, much less report them to parents or others. Trends are not calculated routinely in any of the schools in the study.

A few examples of what is reported and how hard it is to make the meaning standard illustrate the problems. At Vancouver Technical, the key indicators of success are reported to be grade 12 British Columbia provincial examination scores and participation rates in these exams, withdrawal rates, retention rates, attendance rates, honour roll rates, and graduation rates. The researchers note:

> *Provincial exam scores in a number of key subjects have steadily increased since 1985-86, as have participation rates. During the same period, withdrawal rates in all grades have decreased — in grade 8, for example, from 14.6 per cent to 2.2 per cent. Over the past six years, the number of provincial scholarship recipients at Vancouver Technical has increased from a low of six in both 1989 and 1991 to a high of 18 in 1992-93. Vancouver Technical students have also received numerous other awards. In 1993-94, over 100 of the 340 graduates got scholarships or awards. Fourteen Vancouver Technical students were among the 63 Vancouver students who received Kiwanis Awards for their outstanding volunteer service; three of the 14 were in the top ten. Recently a graphics student placed third in the Canadian Skills Competition, allowing the student to move on to the North American championships. Last year a student won one of the ten Gordon Shrum Scholarships, valued at $17,000. A 1993 graduate won a scholarship from the Canada Scholarships Program, and a grade 11 student was selected as one out of 118 outstanding high school students from across North America to participate in Phi Delta Kappa's 1994 Summer Institute at the University of Indiana.*

These indicators are worth noting, but any systematic comparison among schools using this kind of data is almost impossible. These data are not useful to the school for assessing its progress over time or its strengths and weaknesses. The province uses an accreditation process, rather than any particular quantitative indicators, to review schools periodically. During this research, Vancouver Technical was undergoing an accreditation review. The process is designed to have the school examine its own priorities and goals in relation to its community, as well as to allow the province to ensure it is performing in a satisfactory manner. The review is expected to be useful in provoking discussion, and the final report is a way to make the school accountable, for it could recommend that the school not be accredited or be accredited only provisionally.

The accreditation review produced mounds of data, mostly from surveys and reports of meetings and discussions. All staff members and students, along with a sample of parents and the wider community, were surveyed about how well the school was meeting its various mandates. Five staff committees collected information on the five components of effective schools outlined in the ministry accreditation manual: learning experiences, leadership and administration, professional attributes and staff development, school culture, and school and its community. Subsequently, Vancouver Technical created a mission statement committee.

Researchers described the process and commented on it favourably.

> *Accreditation represented a lot of work. Consider the work of Van Tech's mission statement committee. First, the committee sent all teachers a preliminary form asking them to respond to the following questions: "What is the major purpose of our school? How is Vancouver Technical different from other schools? What are the important qualities that our graduating students should possess?" Students were also asked to respond to these questions in writing. Each member of the committee then grouped teacher and student responses into themes, and these became the stimulus for a group discussion. As a result, the group produced an interim mission statement, which was distributed to the entire staff for comment. Based on these comments, the interim statement was revised slightly. The final statement was fairly traditional, yet reflected the teachers' interest in instilling in students a sense of responsibility for their own learning:*
>
> *Together we will provide opportunities for students to develop their ethical, intellectual, social, aesthetic, and physical potential; to encourage students to become self-reliant learners and to accept responsibility for achieving their goals.*

Researchers commented further on the process:

> *Accreditation provides one mechanism for public,*

> *neighbourhood schools to learn more about what their communities most want them to provide. Earlier in the process, a teacher expressed the hope that "our accreditation will help us to prioritize what we see as valuable in education" and "check the community...." The accreditation process currently set out by the ministry seems better at prompting staff to reflect on and improve the teaching and learning environment, however, than at providing a means of consulting the community about future directions.* (Case report, Vancouver Technical School)

Information on student flows is also an important indicator of school success. Are students staying in school? Are they graduating? Are they going on to university in the proportions they or their parents want? Are they getting jobs when they graduate? These questions are prompted by our discussion in the first chapter about the role of schools in providing opportunity. These measures of success are some of the most important to communities.

Rates of school leaving, however, are not systematically reported and, like achievement results, are hard to analyze when they are. Jeanne-Mance is proud of a school-leaving rate of 30 per cent, arguing that it is substantially lower than that of other schools in the Montreal Catholic School Commission. The commission's schools have an average dropout rate of 50 per cent and, for schools similar to Jeanne-Mance in terms of familial instability and low income, the rate is 70 per cent. Jeanne-Mance predicts its own rate will drop to 22 per cent.

Surveys of graduates are carried out in some schools but not in most. The Langley case study reports that a survey of graduates is done by the board, but the results are not available at the school. When the researchers approached the guidance counsellor for such information, answers were hard to find.

Surveys of student, parent, and staff satisfaction are a useful way of gauging whether schools are meeting expectations and of identifying areas of dissatisfaction. They were used by several schools to find out what parents want. The Langley School District, for example, routinely surveys parents, staff, and teachers to judge whether the board's mission is being achieved. However, these results are not reported to the school, nor are they published. Consequently, others cannot find out which schools are more successful or which aspects of a school are considered good. Equally important, the school itself has no record of these opinions to help it evaluate its programs and inform its own discussions.

Research like that undertaken in this Exemplary Schools Project also provides a way of gathering information about schools, encouraging them to reflect on its meaning, and communicating information about schools to the schools themselves as well as to the public. In fact, the research process produced more information than any of these 21 schools had had before. The case studies involved researchers in intensive observation, interviews, and analysis of documents, the results of which were reported back to the schools to provoke reflection and debate. In many instances, the studies became resources for both school and parents and, in some schools, the process opened up discussion that would not otherwise have occurred. This was one of the goals of the study. This report and the case studies are meant to provoke reflection and debate among the public as well. Repeating the process in more schools, focusing on a policy issue like curriculum, the organization of special programs, or the use of achievement indicators, for example, would stimulate reflection in schools and the communities around them.

Research like this is uncommon in Canada. It takes time and commitment from the school, and a willingness to go public that in itself constitutes "exemplariness." The process that researchers used uncovered the schools' understandable sensitivities about their public image. This report begins the process of sharing information about schooling and will, we hope, provide the impetus for more sustained discussion. Although it merely points out the issues debated (and sometimes inappropriately silenced) in Canadian schools, the research process made clear where further inquiry and comparison are needed.

The schools in the study draw on research very little in deciding what to do or which new direction to take. The principal of Hartland discussed research on school change and teachers' lives with the researchers. In Langley, the superintendent referred to research on school decentralization. But they are exceptions. Mostly educators respond to parents, teachers, and the day-to-day exigencies of their lives. Discussions about research, or about what has happened in other schools, need to be encouraged.

Further research on the school processes and dilemmas this report highlights calls for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, combined with interpretation and analysis. Analysis of schools with innovative practices reveals a lot about how schools operate and function. Studies of all schools should become a matter of course and should engender much more co-operation between university researchers and educators than now exists.

Concluding Comments: Measuring Performance for Schools, Parents, and the Public

Educators judge schools on the basis of their experience, test scores, and exam results; parents judge from students' reports and personal experience; policy makers judge from media accounts combined with a narrow range of indicators of academic achievement, usually examination scores, personal anecdotes, and experience. Although teachers assign numerical values to students' performances on report cards and write anecdotal comments, the careful gathering of statistics on a school's performance and writing of evaluative comments on schools is not common practice.

Systematic data collection is constrained by the difficulty of obtaining agreement on which indicators constitute a good measure of school success. The purposes of schools are so broad that disagreements about the relative importance of their goals and ways of understanding and measuring them are plentiful. Credible evidence on varied student achievements and on school processes is expensive and difficult to collect. Different kinds of external publics need different information. Schools themselves need to get specific kinds of information and establish a regular procedure for examining what this information means for their effective functioning.

Policy should be designed to provide schools with a range of indicators to show how students are doing, what teachers are achieving, and how the community is reacting. No single indicator is enough for any school, and no single indicator will apply to all schools. Policy makers need to encourage a more nuanced and complete reporting of what schools do and how well they do it. Although people would interpret these various indicators differently, at least the debate would be better informed. The public as well as the school could participate. Despite the danger in reallocating time and money from central instructional tasks, more information and a more inclusive debate about our schools would serve everyone well.

Chapter 10

Conclusions and Implications

THE EXEMPLARY SCHOOLS PROJECT identified secondary schools across Canada that had a reputation for success. Researchers studied the schools, the different concepts of success that shaped their mission, the variety of communities that they served, the responses they made to the challenges they faced, and the provisions they made for students at risk of dropping out.

Case studies were prepared to examine five issues: 1) how success is defined and acknowledged, 2) how the school interacts with its context, 3) how the structures, processes and culture of the school foster success, (4) how the characteristics of student life in the school involve and support all students, and (5) how the school serves students at risk of dropping out.

Twenty-one schools were selected from over 260 nominations by schools, school districts, university personnel, government departments, community organizations, parent groups, business groups, and the media. No single concept and no criteria of success were imposed; these were left to the initiative of those making nominations.

No claim is being put forward that these schools are representative of all Canadian schools or of the schools in a particular region, that they are the "best" schools in Canada, that they are without problems or faults, or that they are exemplary in the sense that they deserve uncritical imitation. The set of schools is proposed as an illustration of the diversity of Canadian secondary schools, the challenges they face, the tensions with which they must deal, and the creative responses that many schools are making to these challenges and tensions.

The Analysis

Let us summarize some general observations on the schools we have studied.

School Success. Secondary education has symbolic as well as economic and social importance. Its credentials, especially a graduation diploma, constitute a currency that can be used to gain access to further studies or to improved job prospects. This encourages a definition of academic school success in terms of school attendance, grades and credits, and a definition of social success in terms of conformity to disciplinary rules. All schools are concerned with both academic and social objectives, but they differ in the level of interdependence of these objectives and how they come together in school life. Some schools see social goals as more important than academic achievement, others view the social life of students as a necessary means to improved academic performance. Higher-order academic expectations such as critical thinking and creativity, and social expectations in terms of leadership and responsible decision-making are not widely in evidence.

Hierarchy of Knowledge. In these schools, a key issue is the power to define what knowledge qualifies for inclusion in a curriculum and, even more important, what knowledge should form part of the core program for every student. Relatively little debate seems to take place in these schools about what is taught, partly because such decisions are largely determined by government guidelines and by the requirements of post-secondary institutions, especially the universities. The content of the core program is usually seen as a given: language, and especially mathematics and sciences, which are "high stakes" subjects in determining a student's future. The pressures of schedules, the imperatives of timetables, the limits of staff resources, and policies of grouping students (especially streaming) are the focus of discussion.

Curriculum Debates. The curriculum debates that do take place typically focus on certain issues: the nature and status of vocational courses in relation to the academic core; traditional vocational education courses vs. business partnerships and high-tech courses; the adaptation of standard programs to meet the special needs of Aboriginal students (especially in areas of language, traditions, Native spirituality, and job preparation), the gifted, students at risk, those with a learning difficulty, students whose mother tongue is other than the language of instruction of the school; language and literacy, the teaching of second language, and the recognition of languages other than English and French; the role of religious/spiritual/moral values in the school, both as formal content and as implicit community expectations; the role of fine arts in relation to core academic subjects.

Social Goals. Schools demonstrate a great deal of concern with collaboration, respect for others, and self-discipline as important school goals, and all schools emphasize their efforts to provide a caring, secure, community environment. The metaphor of family is often used. Small schools can create this sense of community more easily because of their size; large schools take formal steps to involve students, decentralize structures, personalize services, and create communities within the school.

Responding to Diversity. Schools differ considerably in the degree of diversity in their communities and so they respond to cultural, racial, religious and other differences in a variety of ways; in most of the schools with substantial diversity, there are both formal programs and informal procedures for recognizing the distinctiveness of particular groups and for serving their special needs. Issues of racism are extensively discussed in some of the schools. Gender differences are rarely discussed.

Student Life. All these schools stress the importance of extra-curricular activities in instilling responsibility and leadership. However, most schools hold traditional attitudes towards student government and politics. Only in a couple of schools do students enjoy a structure of government that encourages them to assume major policy and financial responsibilities.

Students at Risk. Most of the schools have programs for students at risk of dropping out, and some schools are primarily devoted to serving their needs. Schools offer special programs, employ specialist teachers and counsellors, and are modifying their regular programs and procedures (like tutoring) to include all students, including those at risk. In most schools and districts, however, there is a tension between offering segregated special programs and incorporating such services into the operation of the school as a whole.

Teachers. Everyone agrees that good teachers are central to the success of a school. In the study, small schools and certain units of larger schools stress the importance of hiring like-minded teachers, larger schools emphasize diversity of skills as well as cultural and gender balance. But every school evidences ongoing and healthy tensions between shared visions and different philosophies. Leadership often comes from a principal - but not always - and schools differ in the model of leadership used and in the balance between individual leadership and professional collegiality and initiative. Teacher organizations are powerful political forces in schools, but in the case of schools that diverge from the mainstream, there are sometimes problems of fit between standard collective agreements and the special needs of hiring and work assignment.

Teaching. In most schools teaching remains a largely individual activity. Teamwork, collaborative planning, program integration, problem-centred courses and non-traditional methods are not common in traditional senior academic courses, but are more frequently found in alternative programs and schools, technical and vocational courses, and junior high school or middle school. Communications technology is available in every school, but although some schools make extensive use of it as both subject and medium of instruction, the impact of technology on the structure and operation of these schools has been very limited.

Community Links. Each of the schools is seen in its community as special in some way. Each school is in a community that has been or is now undergoing change, sometimes demographic, often economic, and schools differ in how their links with the community reflect these changes. All schools say they wish to encourage parent involvement; some have formal mechanisms and others rely successfully on informal communication. In some communities, lack of parent involvement is less an indicator of lack of interest than of satisfaction with and confidence in the school. Most of the schools have developed links with business and social services and often have joint programs, but here too the nature of the community and the opportunities it affords are determining factors in shaping the kinds of relationships the school forms and the influence the community has on the school.

Influence and Choice. Most schools and communities have little local control over major policy issues and core programs, although there are variations among provinces and school districts in the amount of decision making situated at the school level. Most of the schools in the set are schools of choice in that parents have other options at their disposal (private schools, other schools in the district, schools outside the district). Thus schools are to a greater or lesser extent competing for students by relying on their image, activities, services, and special programs.

Information and Accountability. In general, schools have little systematic evidence of the nature and extent of their success; they rely mainly on reputation, traditional image (a poor one to overcome, a good one to guard), and community relations. In many schools academic outcomes are measured through examinations and standardized tests; in some jurisdictions comparisons among schools are possible. Opinion differs, however, about the reliability of these measures and about the degree to which they assess a sufficiently wide range of academic activities or take into consideration the special characteristics of the student population. Systematic measures of other school outcomes are rare, especially in terms of retention rates, transition ratios to post-secondary education, success in further studies or work, or community satisfaction. It is also striking that educational research seems to have only a modest impact on school policies and practices.

The Conclusions

This study suggests a number of general conclusions. Schools are shaped by certain major tensions, which in turn influence the dynamics of their success, their relations with the community, their internal structures, the characteristics of student life, and their response to students at risk.

All schools in the group are influenced by three major tensions, though they vary in how they articulate these tensions and the degree of attention they devote to them: the tension between social and academic goals and functions, what is taught, how broadly it should be conceived, how ambitious the goals should be; the tension between responding to individual and group differences and providing a sense of inclusion, community, and ensuring equality of opportunity for all; the tension between professional autonomy and social accountability, the role of community in shaping school policy and the ways of demonstrating school quality and success.

School success is a complex and constantly evolving concept; different communities place emphasis on different elements. Success is a fragile quality that always involves a balance among different demands and pressures. It needs to be constantly re-evaluated as conditions change. Successful schools are consciously trying to improve themselves by continuing inquiry and deliberative change. However, most schools have little systematic knowledge of the nature and extent of their success and few indicators of institutional performance.

All schools see success in both academic and social terms and there is often a tension between the two. Academic success is largely determined by post-secondary entrance requirements and is defined in terms of taking the right courses and getting good grades; social success is driven by a concern for order and control and is defined in terms of conformity to disciplinary rules and appropriate behaviour, such as respect for others and a sense of responsibility. All schools are preoccupied with developing and guarding a good reputation and image in the community.

Context and community both shape schools, but less diversity is found across population groups and provincial/territorial boundaries than across different types of schools. All schools foster links with the immediate community, sometimes to adapt to it, sometimes to involve it in discussion of wider concerns and issues. The local community has little influence on the academic core of schools, but has some effect on "peripheral" subjects, shared values, and the social goals of schooling.

No single structure was identified with successful schools. Schools are in practice a mix of bureaucratic and organic (or collegial) forms of organization; all schools tend to rely on clear rules, a belief in the importance of community, and space for professional judgement of teachers as essential elements. Although large and small schools often pursue their goals in different ways, there is no indication that size in itself promotes or inhibits success. Leadership is often rooted in an individual, usually the principal —

and in that respect is precarious, given policies of transferring personnel — but it is also often shared by many in the institution. There is universal recognition — by policy makers, professionals, students, parents and communities — that *the* essential element in a successful school consists in the values and attitudes of the teachers. The case studies uncovered little debate about what may be considered the central issues of curriculum, program structure, and teaching methods, and in most schools communications technology is peripheral to the life of the school.

All these schools emphasize the importance of a warm and accepting student life, instilling a sense of belonging to a community, and they consciously use a variety of rituals, a sense of tradition, and shared experiences to promote this attitude. Often these activities are designed to motivate students to pursue academic success; the efforts to involve students are more natural in small schools, more formally organized in larger ones. Only in a few schools do students have substantial responsibilities related to school policy or student government.

All schools make special efforts to help students at risk of dropping out, sometimes formal, sometimes informal. The relative value of separating such students for special service or including them in the regular program is frequently debated. The seriousness with which schools strive to help such students is a test of their resolve to allocate resources and a demonstration of their "value added" function for those most in need of their services.

The Policy Implications

Numerous important issues and tensions in secondary education in Canada emerged in the course of this research project, and these deserve careful and widespread debate. Policy makers should encourage this debate and educational researchers should inform and enlighten it.

Information. School personnel and policy makers need more awareness and systematic knowledge of the environment in which they work, and a wider range of indicators of their performance and success, if this debate is to be informed, if schools are to have continuing feedback on their effects on students, and if change in school policy and practice is to be justified in terms of consequences. Networks should be established to link schools across Canada, encouraging schools of similar types (large urban schools, isolated rural schools, schools with a special mission) to exchange information and ideas and work on joint projects.

Role of Research. Efforts should continue to link research with both policy development and the practice of teaching and to build a research component into the culture of schools.

Leadership. School leadership should not rely too much on one person but rather on different elements in the school community: administrators, teachers, parents, students, politicians, and community leaders. Collaborative modes are more stable and successful.

Community Support. Successful schools require community support, but since communities differ, a diversity of formal and informal structures of community involvement may be needed.

People. Successful schools need appropriate structures, but they also depend on having the right people — administrators, teachers, other professionals, support staff, and volunteers — and more careful attention needs to be given to the engagement and assignment of staff, their professional development, their work and working conditions, and the recognition they receive for creativity and service.

Structures and Programs. The rapidly changing social environment and the variety of contexts within which schools function suggest the need for more diversity in school policy, structure, and practice, especially in the areas of programming, scheduling, use of community resources, access to learning, distance education, and applications of communications technology. The current debates about secondary school curriculum should be encouraged and extended, focusing particularly on the reigning hierarchy of subject disciplines, incorporation of more areas of knowledge, different ways of organizing knowledge, different modes of inquiry (especially critical and creative thinking skills), more interdisciplinary and problem-based approaches, and closer links between the curriculum and the real-life context of secondary school students. Since schools always emphasize the social goals of education (behaviour, leadership, social skills, responsibility), policy makers and researchers should give more attention to the study, cultivation, and assessment of these skills and to their links with success in academic endeavours, careers, and personal life.

Power. More thought and discussion are required about the nature and exercise of power in schools, the current preoccupation with social control, and the empowerment of students to shape their own programs and organize their student life; serious efforts are needed to encourage students to learn how to learn rather than just consume courses and earn credits. Greater attention should be given to issues of values, ethical behaviour, and spirituality. These are sensitive issues but for that reason are crucial to the development of the skills of citizenship — both in schools serving diverse communities and in those in communities with a high degree of shared values.

Trends. Economic, political, and social pressures are moving schools, particularly at the senior secondary school level, in the direction of a clearer hierarchy of programs, *de facto* streaming of students, sharper competition in programs, resources and student achievement, and the marginalization of many programs and students as a result. If high schools are to be more than "prep schools" for post-secondary institutions, if they are to avoid reproducing social hierarchies from one generation to another, they must strengthen their commitment to equality of opportunity to all students - and be honoured for their achievements in this social mission.

If successful schools are going to continue to be successful, they need to factor these challenges into their planning, continue to strengthen their links with their communities, and take more seriously the potential of research in enlightening policy and practice. What make these schools and educators successful at present are ultimately their sense of being special, their alertness and discernment in reading the landscape, their imagination and energy in responding to pressure points, and their competence and dedication in engaging their students in the pursuit of important ideas, valuable skills, and humane values.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Advisory Committee for the Exemplary Schools Project

THE WORK of the Exemplary Schools Project was greatly assisted by an advisory committee of representatives from the 12 provincial and territorial government ministries responsible for elementary and secondary education, and from organizations of parents, trustees, teachers, and education administrators. The committee met three times during the life of the project. Members, and their respective affiliations, are listed below.

Michel Agnaïeff	Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec
Allan Bacon	Canadian Teachers' Federation
Steve Cymbol - Chair	Alberta Department of Education
Raymond Daigle	Ministère de l'Éducation du Nouveau-Brunswick
Berthier Dolbec	La Féderation des commissions scolaires du Québec
Casey Gehrels	Canadian Association of School Administrators
Allan Hammond	Prince Edward Island Department of Education
Gary Hatcher	Newfoundland Department of Education and Training
Byron James	New Brunswick Department of Education
Erica Kreis	Manitoba Department of Education and Training
Margaret Lipp	Saskatchewan Department of Education, Training and Employment
Norma Maguire	Canadian Home and School and Parent-Teacher Federation
Marjorie Mercer	Ontario Ministry of Education and Training

M. S. Naidoo	Northwest Territories Department of Education, Culture and Employment
Dolores Neil	Canadian Home and School and Parent-Teacher Federation
Dan Odin	Yukon Department of Education
Marie Pierce	Canadian School Boards' Association
Maurice Poirier	Ontario Ministry of Education and Training
Tom Rich	Nova Scotia Department of Education and Culture
David Richardson	Nova Scotia Department of Education and Culture
Eldon Rogerson	Prince Edward Island Department of Education
Wally Seipp	Yukon Department of Education
Daniel Trottier	Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec
David Watkins	British Columbia Ministry of Education
Allen Wright	Newfoundland Department of Education and Training

(N.B. Where two names appear from the same department/agency, alternate representatives attended different meetings.)

Appendix B

Case Study Schools, Reports, and Researchers

1 **Vancouver Technical Secondary School** (Vancouver, BC)
"Balancing Diversity and Community: A Large Urban High School Adopts the Mini-School Approach — A Case Study of Vancouver Technical School"
by Deirdre Kelly with Diane Purvey, Kamini Jaipal, David Penberg
University of British Columbia

2 **Langley Fine Arts School** (Langley, BC)
"Arts as an Equal Partner: The Story of Langley Fine Arts School"
by Jane Gaskell, Nadine Binkley, Carol Nicoll, Kandis McLaughlin
University of British Columbia

3 **New Norway School** (New Norway, AB)
"New Norway School"
by Margaret Haughey, Tara Fenwick, Bob Larson, Marie Noonan, Chris Rochon
University of Alberta

4 **Balfour Collegiate** (Regina, SK)
"Images Old and New: Traditions of Support and Investment"
by Neville Hosking and Patrick Renihan
University of Saskatchewan

5 **Joe Duquette High School** (Saskatoon, SK)
"Making the Spirit Dance Within"
by Celia Haig-Brown, with Kathy Vermette, Robert Regnier, Jo-ann Archibald
Simon Fraser University

6 **Kildonan East Collegiate** (Winnipeg, MB)
"Holding Open the Doors"
by Patrick Renihan and Neville Hosking
University of Saskatchewan

7 **Peguis Central High School** (Peguis, MB)
"Kisti nootin"
by Jo-ann Archibald and Celia Haig-Brown, with Verna Kirkness, Rhonda Olson, Cheryl Cochrane, Val Friesen
University of British Columbia

8 **Qitiqliq Secondary School** (Arviat, NT)
"Attautsikut/Together"
by Mary H. Maguire and Lynn McAlpine, with
Barbara Graves, Rebecca Leebe, Tomoko Ishibashi
McGill University

9 **École secondaire de Pain Court** (Pain Court, ON)
"L'École secondaire de Pain Court : une étude de cas"
par Diane Gérin-Lajoie, avec Sylvie Lemay
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

10 **St. Benedict Catholic Secondary School** (Cambridge, ON)
"St. Benedict Catholic Secondary Scool: Case Study"
by Stephen E. Anderson and Noreen Jacka
University of Toronto

11 **Georges Vanier Secondary School** (North York, ON)
"Georges Vanier Secondary School"
by Elizabeth Campbell
University of Toronto

12 **Contact School** (Toronto, ON)
"Contact School: Landscapes of Possibilities in the Inner City"
by Antoinette Gagné and Margaret Robertson
University of Toronto

13 **Corktown Community High School** (Toronto, ON)
"Corktown Community High School: Toronto, Ontario"
by Mary Beattie with Margaret Robertson and
Suzanne Stiegelbauer
University of Toronto

14 **École secondaire Jeanne-Mance** (Montréal, QC)
"Quant l'habit ne fait pas le moine : une étude de cas"
par Thierry P. Karsenti, Josée Labrie, Jessica Saada,

Abdoulaye Barry, Mary H. Maguire
McGill University

15 **Centennial Regional High School** (Greenfield Park, QC)
"A Vision of Excellence"
by Alexander MacDonald, Mary H. Maguire, Jody Markow, Loris Peternelli
McGill University

16 **École secondaire Les Etchemins** (Charny, QC)
"L'école secondaire Les Etchemins : Une école baromètre"
par Céline Castonguay, Claude Deblois, Sylvie Ann Hart, avec Céline Carrier, Renelle Paquet, Marise Provencher
Université Laval

17 **La polyvalente des Appalaches** (Ste-Justine, QC)
"La polyvalente des Appalaches : une école qui fait la différence"
par Claude Deblois, Céline Castonguay, Sylvie Ann Hart, avec François Goupil, Pierre Lachance
Université Laval

18 **École secondaire Népisiguit** (Bathurst, NB)
"Étude de cas : École secondaire Népisiguit"
par Jean-Guy Ouellette, Diane LeBreton Forbes
Université de Moncton

19 **Hartland High School** (Hartland, NB)
"Hartland High School"
by Ann Kilcher and David MacKinnon
Acadia University

20 **Sydney Academy** (Sydney, NS)
"All Hail, Sydney Academy:
The Pride and Joy of Cape Breton"
by Blye Frank
Mount St. Vincent University

21 **Grandy's River Collegiate** (Burnt Islands, NF)
"Grandy's River Collegiate: A Case Study"
by Jean Brown, with Anthony Leamon
Memorial University

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